



**The Gukurahundi “Genocide”:  
Memory and Justice in Independent Zimbabwe**

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To my loving parents.

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‘INdlovu kayisindwa ngumboko wayo’

## ABSTRACT

Operation *Gukurahundi* (1982-1987) commenced and endured within the Midlands and two Matabeleland Provinces of Zimbabwe through a Fifth Brigade army – trained by the North Koreans, and which was accountable to former President Robert Mugabe. This army sought to find 400 armed dissidents, but their excessively violent actions ultimately resulted in 20 000 civilians being killed, thousands being tortured and/or disappearing as well as 400 000 persons brought to the brink of starvation due to targeted food limitations within these regions. The story of *Gukurahundi* is complex and multifaceted, but significantly it was about the political annihilation of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), as an opposition party, as well as their supporters - predominantly from these targeted provinces.

Essentially, the key aspect that this study speaks to is: How has state denial and produced silences of *Gukurahundi* shaped survivor memories across generations; and contributed to justice in independent Zimbabwe?

Amidst produced silences, *Gukurahundi* memory remains existent over 30 years after the occurrence and is nuanced in various ways. The study therefore looks into the memory traces of the post-*Gukurahundi* period through select reminiscences as shared by 30 survivors of *Gukurahundi* who offer a telling around what happened during *Gukurahundi*, and in the aftermath as key informants to the research. This study thus draws attention to 'ordinary' people's stories, as narrated by them, and discusses them against oral history theory. In this regard, the research objectives are to analyse various memory debates associated with this occurrence, such as the nexus between memory and silence; gender and memory; spatialities of memory; as well as intergenerational memory. Another important gleaming which becomes a thread throughout the research is the connection between memory and language(s). Linkages between memory and justice are made, with reference to select initiatives across a variety of actors which are relied upon on as a means to address, memorialise as well as to survive *Gukurahundi*. Oftentimes these actors – including survivors themselves – address *Gukurahundi* outside of the Government of Zimbabwe's arrangements. Finally, this research aims or hopes to contribute to post-conflict commendations.

### ***Zimbabwe – Provincial Map***

*Note:* Two cities – Harare and Bulawayo – currently occupy provincial status. This was not the case at independence.



*Source:* (Internet) [zimstat.co.zw](http://zimstat.co.zw)

*Major Cities, Provinces, and Districts of Zimbabwe*



Source: (Internet) [zimstat.co.zw](http://zimstat.co.zw)

## ACRONYMS

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BMATT	British Military Advisory Training Team
CCJP	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
CIO	Central Intelligence Organisation
COPAC	Constitution Parliamentary Committee
EU	European Union
GGV4J	Gukurahundi Genocide Victims for Justice
GoZ	Government of Zimbabwe
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ID	Identity Document
LRF	Legal Resources Foundation
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MLF	Mthwakazi Liberation Front
MRP	Mthwakazi Republic Party
NDP	National Democratic Union Party
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPRC	The National Peace and Reconciliation Commission
OAU	Organisation of African Union
ONHRI	The Organ of National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration
PISI	Police Internal Security Intelligence
PF-ZAPU	Patriotic Front - Zimbabwe African People's Union
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder



RF	The Rhodesian Front
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
STDs	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
TOV	Torture and Organised Violence
UK	United Kingdom
UMR	United Mthwakazi Republic
USSR	The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (the Soviet Union)
WEF	World Economic Forum
WNLA	Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (also referred Wenela)
ZANLA	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union
ZCBC	Zimbabwe Catholic's Bishops Conference
ZHRC	Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission
ZIPA	Zimbabwe People's Army
ZIPRA	Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army
ZNA	Zimbabwe National Army
ZPRA	Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army

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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction and Historical context

This thesis is a memory study based on oral history methodology and other historical sources. It discusses issues of memory in Zimbabwe, focused around the occurrence of a “genocide” herein referred to as Gukurahundi or Operation Gukurahundi – a series of violations perpetrated by the Zimbabwean state from 1982 to 1987 in the three provinces of Matabeleland North, Matabeleland South, and Midlands.<sup>1</sup> The protracted violence largely affected the Ndebele populace, which collectively is made up of, but not limited to, the Northern Ndebele and Kalanga peoples.<sup>2</sup> This chapter will, among other things, show in greater detail how the “Ndebele” identity (or the “Shona” one at that) when speaking about Gukurahundi is erroneously homogenised and is in fact not definitive. Identity politics, whilst not the only factor to be considered in the complex Gukurahundi story, will thus be discussed as an aspect which was prevalent in the sharing.

The study will highlight state denials as well as the produced silences associated with Gukurahundi during its occurrence and in its aftermath; and, in so doing, will draw out how the entrenched memories of this occurrence from over 30 years ago have had, and continue to have, ramifications on nation-building efforts across generations.<sup>3</sup> In this regard, I suggest that events such as Gukurahundi have laid the foundations for the dominant political leadership and institutionalised governance structures that are in place in post-colonial Zimbabwe today.

This research study thus focuses on various aspects or concepts found in memory studies, including the nexus between memory and silence; gender and memory; sites or spatialities of memory; and intergenerational memory. Linkages between memory and justice will also be made. In this regard, the study will discuss the extent (or lack thereof) of justice initiatives which have been undertaken by the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ), specifically in terms of addressing Gukurahundi, the memory of which is still entrenched in the minds of its populace. Whereas the GoZ, as part of its denial, predominantly continues to produce silences around the occurrence, various actors – including survivors themselves – have sought to address it in different ways

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<sup>1</sup> Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and Legal Resources Foundation, *Breaking the Silence, Building True Peace: A Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands. 1980-1988*. Summary Report. 1999 [Online]. Available: [www.sokwanele.com](http://www.sokwanele.com).

<sup>2</sup> It actually includes various cultural groups/ethnicities within these provinces, whose survival has not been mentioned enough because they are subsumed into the collective Ndebele identity. See, for example, S.J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, “Nation Building in Zimbabwe and the Challenges of Ndebele Particularism”, *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* 8, no.3. (2008a), 37.

<sup>3</sup> The term ‘states of denial’, and in the case of this thesis ‘state denial’ is a phrase derived from Stanley Cohen’s work. See S. Cohen, *States of Denial: Knowing About Atrocities and Suffering* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2001).

outside of the state's arrangements. These initiatives are a means of surviving Gukurahundi or else attempting to cope with the memories of this dark period.

Gukurahundi is a Shona word, which means "the early rain which washes away the chaff before the spring rains".<sup>4</sup> Essentially, Gukurahundi was the name given to the 3,500-strong army, under the command of Colonel Perence Shiri, which was trained to rid newly independent Zimbabwe of 400 armed "dissidents" in the Matabelelands (North and South) and Midlands provinces.<sup>5</sup> This army was known as the Fifth Brigade or the Gukurahundi army.

The Ndebele predominantly live in the Matabelelands and Midlands provinces and make up 18% of Zimbabwe's population of approximately 15 million.<sup>6</sup> They are the largest ethno-geographical group after the Shona (76%) who have traditionally resided in the Mashonaland. At independence, the Ndebele were mostly known to hold political allegiance to the Patriotic Front–Zimbabwe African People's Union (PF-ZAPU), under the leadership of Joshua Nkomo, which fought the liberation struggle alongside Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), which had a predominantly Shona following at the time.<sup>7</sup>

Authors such as Raftopoulos and Mlambo, and Bhebe et al. have provided historiographies of colonialism and nationalism in what was previously Rhodesia and mapped out the journey which led to ZANU and ZAPU's difficult coexistence in independent Zimbabwe.<sup>8</sup> Sachikonye notes that the liberation struggle of Zimbabwe – also known as the Rhodesian Bush War – from 1964 to 1979, had three main protagonists: "the settler colonial state; ZAPU and its military wing ZIPRA [or ZPRA, Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army]; and ZANU with its military wing ZANLA [Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army]".<sup>9</sup> His discussion on the liberation struggle makes an important point: because whilst it is easy to pit the larger ZANU and ZAPU movements and their histories against each other, this has unfortunately superseded or taken attention away from many other African nationalist parties which existed at that time in the country, and whose contributions have been increasingly side-lined. Sachikonye notes that the Rhodesian Front of

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<sup>4</sup> This is a well cited definition of Gukurahundi which has been referred to by prominent authors writing about Zimbabwe such as the Catholic Commission Justice Report (CCJR), Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Peter Godwin, amongst other authors.

<sup>5</sup> The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and Legal Resources Foundation, *"Breaking the Silence, Building True Peace: A Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands. 1980-1988"*. Summary Report, 1999, [www.sokwanele.com](http://www.sokwanele.com).

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.zimdat.zimstat.co.zw/zimdat/> and [Worldpopulationreview.com](http://Worldpopulationreview.com)

<sup>7</sup> J. Alexander, J. McGregor, and T. Ranger, *Violence and Memory: One Hundred Years in the 'Dark Forests' of Matabeleland, Zimbabwe* (Oxford: Currey, 2000), 181.

<sup>8</sup> B. Raftopoulos and A. Mlambo, *Becoming Zimbabwe – A History from the Pre-colonial Period to 2008* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2009). See N. Bhebe, T. Ranger, and D. Jeater, "Soldiers in Zimbabwe's Liberation War", *Journal of African History*, January 1 (1997).

<sup>9</sup> L.M. Sachikonye, *Zimbabwe's Lost Decade: Politics, Development & Society* (Harare: Weaver Press, 2012), 8.



the 1950s, under the leadership of Winston Field and Ian Smith, represented the white supremacy of the settler colony, and he details their various policies and views towards the black majority.<sup>10</sup> As highlighted by authors such as Heike Schmidt, these included land appropriations, unequal distribution of resources, and denial of political freedoms to the black majority, as evidenced in the constant banning of African national parties and arrests of their leaders, as a means to curtail their self-rulership.<sup>11</sup> It is in this atmosphere that African nationalism gained traction, even as constant bans curtailed progress.

ZAPU was formed on 17 December 1961 as a direct successor to the National Democratic Union Party (NDP) which had been banned by the settler regime barely nine months after its formation in 1961.<sup>12</sup>

The predecessor to the NDP was the Southern Rhodesian African National Congress, which was the first national political organisation “to struggle for the democratic rights of Africans in Rhodesia”.<sup>13</sup> Dabengwa details ZAPU’s strong connections with South Africa’s African National Congress (ANC) and gives an example of joint operations between them during the liberation war; namely, the ZAPU/ANC Batoka Gorge Campaign.<sup>14</sup> I highlight this detail here, as I will show at a later stage in the thesis how political on-goings in Matabeleland or Zimbabwe – including Gukurahundi – have tended to involve a myriad of other actors – local, regional, and international. For instance, ZAPU was closely aligned to the erstwhile Soviet Union, receiving most of its material support during the liberation war from the latter. ZAPU was therefore aligned to what Sachikonye refers to as a “Soviet-type” of socialism.<sup>15</sup>

ZANU was formed as a party in August 1963, as a result of a faction that split away from ZAPU for several reasons, including varying ideological views about the strategic way forward. ZANU was supported by China and adopted Maoist ideology as part of its nationalism. This split from ZAPU enabled an environment where political loyalties with heightened rhetoric were maintained, and which encouraged ethnic and geographic (or regional) divides.<sup>16</sup> As Alexander, McGregor, and Ranger note, this “created the possibility for conflict along these lines”.<sup>17</sup> Sachikonye shows how

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<sup>10</sup> Sachikonye, *Zimbabwe’s Lost Decade*, 4.

<sup>11</sup> See Heike Schmidt, *Colonialism & Violence in Zimbabwe: a History of Suffering* (Woodbridge, Suffolk : James Currey, 2013) whose writing is about colonial Zimbabwe and the liberation war, and highlights how long the standing anti-colonial sentiments highlighted above, contributed to local communities resistance through violence. In this regard communities played a big role in mobilization for African nationalism.

<sup>12</sup> D. Dabengwa, “ZIPRA in the Zimbabwe War of National Liberation” in N. Bhebe and T. Ranger (eds.), *Soldiers in Zimbabwe’s Liberation War* (London: James Currey, 1995), 25.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 29

<sup>15</sup> Sachikonye, *Zimbabwe’s Lost Decade*, 9.

<sup>16</sup> Raftopoulos and Mlambo, *Becoming Zimbabwe*; See Alexander et al., *Violence and Memory*, 181.

<sup>17</sup> Alexander et al., *Violence and Memory*, 181.

the political and the tribal later became central in Gukurahundi discourse, as became precedent and was already going on during the liberation times.<sup>18</sup> Notably, former president Robert Mugabe himself highlighted how the divisions went beyond the liberation struggle, when he stated:

The tribal character of both ZANU and ZAPU could be explained only in terms of loyalties emanating from old feudal social formations which revolved around the authority of the tribal king. The fact that the leader of ZANU was Shona and that of ZAPU was Ndebele, played into these feudal loyalties with the result that the Shona tended to drift to ZANU while the Ndebele tended to drift to ZAPU.<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, Joshua Nkomo is also believed to have spoken to identity politics, or the tribe, when he “denounced [the] Fifth Brigade as a political and tribal army come to wipe out the Ndebele[s]”.<sup>20</sup> From all this one concurs that ZANU/ZAPU political co-existence has been riddled with distrust and violence since inception, and that sometimes this conflict has become personalised around specific leaders. Phimister’s article, aptly titled “‘Zimbabwe is Mine’: Mugabe, Murder and Matabeleland”, connotes this personalisation of the nationalism agenda around specific persons or leaders. However, the more significant point the title makes is around how Robert Mugabe was willing to fight tooth and nail to stay in rulership, even if the lengths that he had to go to in order to stay in power meant the casualties were great.<sup>21</sup> It is not surprising then that as the liberation war drew to a close, Nkomo and Mugabe – despite having been encouraged and even coerced by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to negotiate terms at the Lancaster House Conference in 1979 as a united Patriotic Front (representing a single organisation) – could not maintain the farce of unity. They abandoned any such ideas of working together as soon as the conference ended.<sup>22</sup>

The result was that they contested the Independence elections as independent organisations and not as the Patriotic Front. What happened after that is another story.<sup>23</sup>

It is against this backdrop, and in the aftermath of the liberation struggle that Gukurahundi commenced in independent Zimbabwe.

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<sup>18</sup> Sachikonye, *Zimbabwe's Lost Decade*, 11.

<sup>19</sup> R. Mugabe, “The Unity Accord: its Promise for the Future” in C. Banana (ed.), *Turmoil and Tenacity* (Harare : College Press, 1989), 338.

<sup>20</sup> I. Phimister, “‘Zimbabwe is Mine’: Mugabe, Murder and Matabeleland.”, *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies* 10, no. 4 (2009), 475.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Bhebe and Ranger, *Soldiers in Zimbabwe's Liberation*, 35.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

Alexander et al. map out the period from 1980 to 1983 as one during which violence in Zimbabwe escalated, with the source of arms, or suspicions about arms, exacerbating the situation. They argue that after ZANU won the February 1980 elections, it feared the possibility that a “disappointed ZAPU would use their (ZIPRA) forces, which were still largely based outside the country to obtain victory by other means”.<sup>24</sup> This was a source of concern for ZANU as “ZIPRAs capacity for conventional warfare was a source of friction” and sowed seeds of distrust.<sup>25</sup> In this atmosphere, designated assembly points for demobilisation and integration of Rhodesian Front, ZANLA, and ZIPRA combatants into the Zimbabwe National Army were set up.

Given the context, it should not come as a surprise that the Entumbane Uprisings of 1981 occurred, and which were a precursor to the events of Gukurahundi. As Peter Stiff notes, the fighting at Entumbane had to do with the movement of heavily armed men into crowded townships; where matchbox housing schemes intended for the urban homeless were converted into holding camps for ZANLA and ZIPRA combatants, whilst the government slowly attempted to retrain and integrate them into the army; or else provide alternative livelihood options in the interim.<sup>26</sup> ZIPRA and ZANLA soldiers at Entumbane were put into adjacent camps, literally living next to each other, without the presence of officers, while “the tribal and political differences left over from the bush war were unresolved”.<sup>27</sup> The two groups turned on each other, and it became an armed battle, with casualties and many civilians living in the area being forced to flee. It must be noted that such occurrences were not unique to Matabeleland (even as the Government of Zimbabwe insisted that such violence was the reason for having the Gukurahundi army in Matabeleland specifically). There is ample evidence of conflict amongst former combatants at other assembly points in the Mashonaland at this time, for similar reasons to those that existed in Entumbane.<sup>28</sup> However, a Gukurahundi army was not sent to them.<sup>29</sup>

Stiff highlights how, during this period of demobilisation (1981–1982), there was a notable upsurge in ZIPRA activities as a result of arrests of key ZAPU leaders. He states that these arrests triggered the defection of hundreds – if not thousands – of ZIPRA soldiers (from the army) who went back to the bush. Tensions within the National Army itself ran high, with ZANLA and ZIPRA making accusations and counter-accusations that the other was concealing arms.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Alexander et al., *Violence and Memory*, 181.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> P. Stiff, *Cry Zimbabwe: Independence - Twenty Years on* (Alberton: Galago, 2000), 51.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 51 – 52.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Stiff, *Cry Zimbabwe*, 158.

Many ZIPRA cadres also defected as they felt that they were being targeted and killed within the Zimbabwe National Army mechanism – where they were not being protected adequately.<sup>31</sup> There were also deserters at assembly points, i.e. persons who had not yet been integrated into the army. Many left as fugitives and took their weaponry with them, disillusioned with life in the camps and fearing their lives were in danger.<sup>32</sup> Whilst there are many theories and debates about who the “400 dissidents” whom the Gukurahundi army was seeking out, it is believed that some of these included former guerrillas who had defected under the circumstances highlighted above.

Whilst it is possible to hold several different factions – such as ex-ZIPRA/ZANLA guerrillas, the Rhodesian army, and even the South African apartheid government – liable for the Gukurahundi atrocities meted out to large numbers of the civilian populace, the burden and the guilt of this “genocide” has tended to be apportioned to the Government of Zimbabwe. The Gukurahundi army’s passing out ceremony took place in December 1982, and their first deployment was in Matabeleland North in January 1983. The Fifth Brigade was later deployed to the South in February of the following year.<sup>33</sup>

Specially trained by the North Koreans, Zimbabwe’s Fifth Brigade comprised “almost entirely of ex-ZANLAs who were deployed by and were answerable to former President Robert Mugabe himself, being outside of the usual army command structures”.<sup>34</sup> This “red-bereted army”, whose main presence was in the villages, was deployed in a series of cycles in 1983, 1984, and 1985. Eppel states that the cyclical or repeated resurgence of the Gukurahundi army between the years 1982 and 1987 was because the army took time to retreat, return to base for more training, and strategise further on the way forward.<sup>35</sup> Simply put, it appears to have been a calculated, systematic, and well thought through form of violence, meted out to unarmed citizenry by the state.

It is estimated that the actions of the Gukurahundi army resulted in more than 20,000 civilian deaths including a large percentage of women and children. Overall, this era was filled with torture, displacement, as well as properties being destroyed. At the height of Gukurahundi, during the 1985 election, over 400,000 civilians were at the brink of starvation due to politically-motivated and regionally-focused food shortages.<sup>36</sup> The Catholic Commission for Justice and

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<sup>31</sup> Alexander, *Violence and Memory*, 183.

<sup>32</sup> Stiff, *Cry Zimbabwe*, 55.

<sup>33</sup> Phimister, “Zimbabwe is Mine”, 473.

<sup>34</sup> Shari Eppel, “‘Gukurahundi’: The Need for Truth and Reparation,” in *Zimbabwe: Injustice and Political Reconciliation*, ed. Brian Raftopoulos and Tyrone Savage (African Minds, 2004), 44–45.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>36</sup> Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and Legal Resources Foundation, *Breaking the Silence*, 1999.

Peace (CCJP) and the Legal Resources Foundation (LRF) report of 1997 records narratives of the severe cruelty exhibited by the troops and highlights that people were not even allowed to mourn or bury the dead, as that act alone was punishable by death.<sup>37</sup> Stiff states:

The [Fifth] brigade was not provided with a disciplinary code or mechanisms to deal with indiscipline when it first took to the field. Its instructors, it was said had never envisaged the occurrence of any major indiscipline. This, judging by their subsequent behaviour, presumably meant they were allowed free reign to do whatever they liked ... Eventually disciplinary machinery was introduced, but what triggered this is unknown.<sup>38</sup>

The current president of Zimbabwe, Emmerson Mnangagwa, in an interview at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in January 2018, attempted to problematise and query the death toll of 20,000 – a commonly used figure – insisting that the CCJP’s number is a gross inflation and that 10,000 people died during Gukurahundi instead.<sup>39</sup> It is worth noting that Mnangagwa “earned his nickname – as ‘the Butcher of Matabeleland’ in the mid-1980s for overseeing the so-called Gukurahundi” in his capacity as the Minister of State Security at the time.<sup>40</sup>

Indeed, everything about Mnangagwa’s argument, whilst common, is insensitive and not a very useful stance to take. The gravity of the human rights violations committed should not rest in verbally debating the number of people who died, as much as it should on the broader residues of the violence and its impact on the nation, for example, on identity, on trauma and memory, as well as on socio-economic and political development. Mnangagwa’s assertion seems to suggest, for instance, that the death of 10,000 people is somehow more acceptable or more easily palatable than the 20,000 people that many others insist died. This debate forms part of the justification and denialist arguments in the memory wars associated with Gukurahundi, and it will be discussed at greater length in chap. 5 of this thesis.

Fixating on minimising, or in alternative instances exceptionalising, the death toll and other factors associated with the Gukurahundi atrocity, resonates with what Holocaust scholars such as Rothenberg and Stannard refer to as “hierarchies of suffering, or oppression”, where violations

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<sup>37</sup> Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and Legal Resources Foundation., *Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe: A report on the disturbances in the Matabeleland and the Midlands* (London: Hurst and Company, 1997).

<sup>38</sup> Stiff, *Cry Zimbabwe*, 180.

<sup>39</sup> B. Mananavire, “E.D. Refuses to apologise for Gukurahundi”. Daily News. (27 January 2018) <https://www.dailynews.co.zw/articles/2018/01/27/ed-refuses-to-apologise-for-gukurahundi>.

<sup>40</sup> C. Timberg, “Inside Mugabe’s Violent Crackdown”. Washington Post. (July 5 2008).

such as Gukurahundi are essentialised and made “unique” to the context or, in the alternative, deemed not to be of any real significance.<sup>41</sup> A question could be asked about why Gukurahundi matters? Why is it given so much importance amongst the many other violations of human rights that have occurred in Zimbabwe - including pre-independence injustices perpetrated under the Ian Smith government? This question in fact bears much resonance to some of the questions which Witz, Minkley, and Rassool pose when they talk about the historical context and commemorations of the South African War of 1899–1902, for example. They ask:

What makes the South African war more important than all the wars of conquest and dispossession throughout the northern Cape in the 19th century, against Tswana, Khoi, San, Korana? ... Why should the South African war be privileged over these other wars?<sup>42</sup>

Whilst there may be several reasons behind the importance of zooming in on the South African war in the Witz, Minkley, and Rassool study, I can equally offer myriad reasons for an oral history study whose memory lens is formed around the Gukurahundi occurrence in Zimbabwe. Whilst this research focuses distinctively on Gukurahundi, it does not seek to take away from other violations which have occurred in Zimbabwe, such as Operation Murambatsvina (Operation Restore Order), in which the government unlawfully cracked down on street vendors, thus dismantling livelihoods and leading to displacement.<sup>43</sup> Another example of state violence would be Operation Makavhotera Papi (Operation Whom did you Vote for?) where Sachikonye highlights those who were sought out and punished by the military for voting against Mugabe in the first Presidential round of 2008.<sup>44</sup> I am not of the view that such personal and unique events should ever be scaled and contested. Rather, as a subject of study, Gukurahundi is of topical interest to me, having had an impact on my life and those of many others, as one of the larger scale violent incidents in Matabeleland, where I come from (see chap. 3 for more on my personal reflections). This study does not assume Gukurahundi to be more important than other similar incidents, simply based on the significantly higher body count or for any other reasons. Gukurahundi is simply the selected, accessible, and experienced lens for the carrying out of this study.

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<sup>41</sup> See Michael Rothenberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 9. ; David E. Stannard, *Uniqueness as Denial: The Politics of Genocide Scholarship* in *Is the Holocaust Unique?* Alan S. Rosenbaum (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 49-50.

<sup>42</sup> L. Witz, G. Minkley, and C. Rassool, “No End of a [History] Lesson : Preparations for the Anglo-Boer War Centenary Commemoration”. *South African Historical Journal* 41. no. 1. (2017), 176

<sup>43</sup> Zimbabwe’s Operation Murambatsvina : the Tipping Point? Pretoria: International Crisis Group, 2005.

<sup>44</sup> Lloyd Sachikonye, *“When a State Turns on Its Citizens : 60 Years of Institutionalised Violence in Zimbabwe”*, (Weaver Press, 2011), 49

Also, whilst it remains debatable whether Gukurahundi was an essentialised occurrence or not, there is no gainsaying that it was a significant occurrence, and it is important to analyse how it impacted the way forward in the making of Zimbabwe.

Conflict can be a precursor for nation-building processes. In this regard, Ndlovu-Gatsheni asserts that Gukurahundi was a meaningless conflict, which failed to be “a catalyst for change or to produce necessary and constructive transformation”.<sup>45</sup> Seemingly, the only real consequence of Gukurahundi was that the ruling government achieved state and regime consolidation, but significantly failed in its role to build a nation, and instead contributed towards it being divided along lines of ethnicity and geo-politics. Phimister refers to this as “an articulation of an authoritarian and intolerant nationalism”.<sup>46</sup> Eppel corroborates these sentiments, noting that for many Ndebele people, Gukurahundi is simplistically understood as, and synonymously linked with being, an occurrence which was a means to exorcise them and to make them insignificant in the bigger political scheme.<sup>47</sup> She writes:

5 Brigade told victims that they were being punished because they were Ndebele – that all Ndebeles supported ZAPU, and all ZAPU supporters were dissidents.<sup>48</sup>

Ndlovu-Gatsheni further elaborates:

whilst this violence was meant to destroy Ndebele particularism as a threat to Shona triumphalism, its consequences were the reverse. The openly ethnic nature of the violence pushed the Ndebele into an even greater awareness of their differences with the Shona ... of being Ndebele and a sense of not being part of Zimbabwe.<sup>49</sup>

Thus, it can be argued that the governance and leadership transitions in present-day Zimbabwe continue to reflect calculated geo-politics and ethnic dominance (and/or marginalisation), which stem from way back in history, as highlighted by authors such as Raftopoulos and Savage.<sup>50</sup>

Authors such as Ranger and Phimister caution that Zimbabweans should not get stuck in assigning and/or dealing with issues by simplistically referring to them as the “Ndebele” and/or the “Shona” issue, i.e. categories delineated on the basis of language and tribe.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, Vail as

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<sup>45</sup> S.J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, “‘For the Nation to Live, the Tribe Must Die’: the Politics of Ndebele Identity and belonging in Zimbabwe” in B. Zewde (eds.), *Society, State and Identity in African History* (Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies, 2008b).

<sup>46</sup> Phimister, “Zimbabwe is Mine”, 473.

<sup>47</sup> Eppel, “‘Gukurahundi’: The Need for Truth and Reparation 2004.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>49</sup> S.J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, “Rethinking Chimurenga and Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe: A Critique of Partisan National History”, *African Studies Review* 55, no. 3 (2012), 1.

<sup>50</sup> B. Raftopoulos and T. Savage, *Zimbabwe Injustice and Political Reconciliation* (Harare: Weaver Press, 2004).

<sup>51</sup> T. Ranger, *Bulawayo Burning the Social History of a Southern African City, 1893-1960* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK; Harare: James Currey; Weaver Press, 2010); I. Phimister, “‘Zimbabwe is Mine’: Mugabe, Murder, and Matabeleland,” *Safundi. The Journal of South African and American Studies* 10, no. 4 (2009).

well as Ranger discuss and explain why the concept of “tribe”, along with many of these “tribal identities”, has been and very much remains a social construct, mainly designed through colonial “divide and rule” systems.<sup>52</sup> Ranger notes, for example, that in the 1930s, clans such as the Karanga, Zezuru, Manyika, Korekore, Rozwi, and Ndau did not refer to themselves as Shona – the colonialists did, but not the majority populace.<sup>53</sup> Today, they are collectively termed and grouped as Shona.

Indeed, the same can be said about “Ndebeleness” as it is not a fixed primordial identity. Authors such as Ndlovu-Gatsheni argue that historically, the notion of a “Ndebele” nationhood or identity as is currently conceived is not accurate, as its construction has been a cultural process of assimilation and consolidation stretching back to pre-colonial times, but which has included reinvention and been exacerbated for political reasons or governance by colonialists.<sup>54</sup> In this, Ndlovu-Gatsheni challenges Ranger’s ideas of the “coloniser” as being the inventor of Ndebele identity. He states that Ndebele identity-making, for example, goes back in history to include Mfecane and Nguni-Sotho nation-building strategies of the 1820s, which included Mzilikazi Khumalo, the founding father of the Ndebele.<sup>55</sup> Eppel asserts that “Ndebele” identity now tends to be geographic and, amongst other things, incorporative of a collective of many other identities, which in some instances in the past - mainly through conquering wars - were forcibly incorporated into the Ndebele state. There continue to be some limits to this process as:

linguistic minorities have also been mobilized in peripheral districts against Ndebele dominance. However, what unites Matabeleland is a shared history: allegiance to ZAPU cuts across tribal tensions, and so has a shared history of post-independence persecution.<sup>56</sup>

A more significant discussion on this issue ensues in chaps. 4 and 6, where I evaluate the idea of languages, “tribe”, as well as geography as a site of Gukurahundi memory. Worth noting here, though, is that an increasing number of scholars and novelists writing about Matabeleland are not keen on the use of words such as tribe, ethnic group, clan, etc. to describe Matabeleland and specifically Ndebele-speaking persons.<sup>57</sup> Authors like Ndlovu-Gatsheni use the terms nation or nationhood as opposed to tribe. Others such as Phathisa Nyathi have promulgated the use of the

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<sup>52</sup> Leroy Vail, “Introduction,” in *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (London; Berkeley: Currey ; University of California Press, 1989).

<sup>53</sup> Ranger, *Bulawayo Burning the Social History of a Southern African City, 1893-1960*.

<sup>54</sup> S.J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *The Ndebele Nation : Reflections on Hegemony, Memory and Historiography* (Amsterdam: Rozenberg, 2009).

<sup>55</sup> Ndlovu – Gatsheni, *Nation Building in Zimbabwe*, 37

<sup>56</sup> S, Eppel, “Matabeleland: Its Struggle for National Legitimacy, and the Relevance of this in the 2008 Election” in *Perspectives*. Heinrich Boll Foundation on [www.boell.de](http://www.boell.de), 2014.

<sup>57</sup> Ndlovu-Gatsheni, “Nation Building in Zimbabwe”.



term Mthwakazi, finding that it is a more inclusive term, representative of a variety of nations such as the Sotho, Venda, Kalanga, etc. residing within the Matabelelands and Midlands provinces.<sup>58</sup> I do not know the extent to which ordinary people accept this term, refer to it, and use it, or perhaps if it is a part of “imagining community”, as Anderson suggests.<sup>59</sup> Ndlovu-Gatsheni, for instance, states:

there is no clear definition of what uMthwakazi means. Some people think it is derived from uMutwa – a Ndebele name for the original inhabitants of Southern Africa known as the san.<sup>60</sup>

Mthwakazi is unfortunately an emotionally charged phrase and a difficult word to use, as it also has currency amongst various secessionist groups in Zimbabwe – in what they refer to as the Mthwakazi line dividing the country into Zimbabwe and Mthwakazi (see map 1.1).<sup>61</sup> A Mthwakazi line delineates Matabeleland North, Matabeleland South, Bulawayo, and Midlands provinces from the rest of Zimbabwe. Geographies on the Mthwakazi part of the map tend overall to represent the spaces affected by Gukurahundi.

**Map 1. 1: Mthwakazi Geographical Area**



Source: (the internet) [umthwakazireview.com](http://umthwakazireview.com)

<sup>58</sup> Ndlovu-Gatsheni, “Nation Building in Zimbabwe”.30.

<sup>59</sup> K. Anderson and D.C. Jack, “Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses” in S. Gluck and P. Patai (eds.), *Women’s Words, The Feminist Practice of Oral History* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 31 footnote 4.

<sup>61</sup> These include groups such as Mthwakazi Liberation Front (MLF), and the Mthwakazi Republic Party (MRP).

For the purpose of this thesis, I may occasionally use the word Mthwakazi, but I insist that this is *not* an endorsement of impassioned ongoing secessionist debates – rather, it is a deliberate attempt on my part to acknowledge Gukurahundi history as being more than just about Ndebele persons. I attempt to recognise many other nationhoods which ought to be included as a significant part of this collective story. Indeed, there is the danger of replacing one term (for example, Ndebele or ethnic group) with another (in this case, Mthwakazi), if these terms are not able to help us better understand collective identities.

Godwin therefore states that whilst the ethnicity and geographical divide highlighted above may have been exacerbated by Gukurahundi and put forward as the main reason behind its occurrence; he refers to Gukurahundi largely as an act of ‘politicide’ in Zimbabwe as opposed to ‘genocide’.<sup>62</sup> Whereas genocide is an attempt to wipe out an ethnic group, he defines politicide as the practice of eliminating an entire political movement. Godwin therefore theorises that Gukurahundi itself may not necessarily have been about Shona versus Ndebele identities, as much as it was about undermining and wiping out the opposition party ZAPU and punishing its supporters.<sup>63</sup> He notes that central to ZANU’s existence is the idea of holding on to state power at all costs. To buttress this theory, Godwin refers to the 2008 post-election violence largely targeted at loyalists of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) (which has both a Ndebele and Shona following) as an example of the politicide cycle of violence reinforcing itself.<sup>64</sup> The essence of Godwin’s thesis is that had various stakeholders reflected on the Gukurahundi past, they would have realised that there was an emerging pattern of rulership and political-party dominance, and they could have managed or at least anticipated the resurgence of such violence in 2008.

Mutizwa, whilst not referring to Gukurahundi specifically as a politicide, writes to the same effect. For him, Gukurahundi ideology or “Gukurahundism” is a concept, not an event, in which political opponents are eradicated – and where perpetrators are not prosecuted – as they sacrifice their lives for the sake of the political party.<sup>65</sup> Essentially, Mutizwa refers to Gukurahundism as ongoing psychological warfare against the people for political gains, thus showing the continuum of this ideology to date at the national level.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> P. Godwin, *The Fear: The Last Days of Robert Mugabe* (United Kingdom: Pan Macmillan, 2010), 105.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> R. Mutizwa, *Gukurahundi Ideology: Why Zimbabwe is in Crisis*. (Gweru: Self-published, 2009), 19 – 20.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

Seemingly, Godwin sees the political aspect of conflict as a uniquely separate matter to the ethnic, in the same way that the 1948 Genocide Convention does. Considering that ZAPU loyalists were a specific nationhood ethnically, and incidentally supported ZAPU politically, it is clear that in this case the political and ethnic are intertwined. The Genocide Convention defines genocide as

acts committed with the intent to destroy in part, a national, ethnical [*sic*], racial or religious group]. These “acts” include killing, causing serious bodily and/or mental harm, inflicting conditions to destroy a group, preventing births, and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.<sup>67</sup>

Countering Godwin’s stance on politicide, and going beyond the 1948 Genocide Convention, newer and more inclusive definitions of genocide include acts of killing based on political affiliation as very much being an integral part of genocidal actions, and which do not need to be confined to a different categorisation. I use the following definition, as provided by Chirot and McCauley, for whom

a genocidal mass murder *is politically motivated violence* that directly or indirectly kills a substantial proportion of a targeted population, *combatants and non-combatants alike*, regardless of their age and gender.<sup>68</sup>

Theoretical and ideological discussion on whether Gukurahundi is a genocide or not tend to place weight, not necessarily on its definition per se, but on the reasons behind the occurrence and the recourses to justice that victims can access, including punitive arrangements for perpetrators to be held to account for the atrocities. These genocide/politicide debates are discussed further later in the chap., in the section on “Motivation/Significance of the Study”.

Today, we see proponents of Gukurahundi, such as Perence Shiri and Emmerson Mnangagwa, continue to enjoy leadership positions in the country.<sup>69</sup> This highlights a culture of impunity, underscoring the point that the Government of Zimbabwe has tolerated and even justified the deaths of its citizens, without being held liable to its people or really engaging and acknowledging the severity of this issue. It sets the precedent that such violence is acceptable and therefore that

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<sup>67</sup> A. Lupel and E. Verdeja, *Responding to Genocide: The Politics of International Action*. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013), 159

<sup>68</sup> D. Chirot, and C. McCauley, *Why Not Kill Them All? The Logic and Prevention of Mass Murder* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006).

<sup>69</sup> At the time of writing this thesis Perence Shiri is serving as Minister of Lands, Agriculture and Rural Resettlement. He is a retired commander of the Air Force of Zimbabwe and was a member of the Joint Operations Command which exerts day to day control over Zimbabwe’s Government. During Gukurahundi, he was the commander of the Fifth Brigade of Zimbabwe; Emmerson Mnangagwa is currently the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe. In the past, he has been Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs of Zimbabwe; as well as the head of the Joint Operations Command. At the time of the Gukurahundi Massacres, he was State Security Minister.

any recurrence of such violence could, like Gukurahundi, have no real ramifications – this, despite mounting pressure from various stakeholders to see the matter addressed through justice and reparative means.

The following are select examples of the pressure that has been mounted by various stakeholders – largely, but not all, civil society groups – calling for Gukurahundi to be addressed:

- Jonathan Moyo’s Gukurahundi National Memorial Bill, which he attempted to table in 2006, but which fizzled out once he obtained political office and resurrected his political career. Incidentally, Moyo’s father was killed by the Gukurahundi army.<sup>70</sup>
- Felix Magagela Sibanda’s call for a private member’s bill to deal with issues of compensation.
- The Gukurahundi Genocide Victims for Justice’s (GGV4J) continuous call for justice and reparations.
- The re-release of the 1997 report of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in 2007 (in South Africa) with the aim of bringing this much “whispered” about period in Zimbabwe’s history to light and making it accessible, thus allowing it – hopefully – to be addressed.<sup>71</sup>
- The international community’s re-opening of the topic of Gukurahundi at the 2007 European Union (EU)–Africa Summit in Lisbon with a view to increasing the future prospects of peace and stability in the country.
- (Past) statements issued by the former National Healing and Reconciliation Co-Minister, Moses Mzila Ndlovu, referred to the fact that not acknowledging Gukurahundi was a stumbling block to national healing and reconciliation processes.<sup>72</sup> He was arrested twice for his sentiments and political opinions on similarly related issues.

Seemingly, despite public appeal (including increased access to cyberspace and intensified human rights discourses) for this matter to be confronted, the Zimbabwean government has not

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<sup>70</sup> All Africa. Zimbabwe: Gukurahundi killed my Father : Moyo. 27 January 2005. <https://allafrica.com/stories>. Also, At the time of commencing this thesis Jonathan Moyo served as the Information, Media and Broadcasting Services Minister under Robert Mugabe’s administration (2013 – 2015). He then served as the Minister of Higher Education (2015 – 2017). His tenure ended abruptly on 19 November 2017 when he was expelled from ZANU-PF by the party’s central committee, along with President Robert Mugabe, where he fled the country after his removal.

<sup>71</sup> Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace., *Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe: A report on the disturbances in the Matabeleland and the Midlands* (London: Hurst and Company, 2007). Copies of this book, which in the past were inaccessible, were sold in prominent bookshops such as Exclusive Books in South Africa as well as electronically, reaching a huge readership and thus bringing the conversation to the fore once again;

<sup>72</sup> Mzila Ndlovu to Campaign for Gukurahundi Bill on [www.Bulawayo24.com](http://www.Bulawayo24.com). Published on 11 June 2012.

Unfortunately, the Organ of National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration (ONRHI) whose Ministry Mzila-Ndlovu was a part of was dissolved after the 2013 elections when then President Robert Mugabe announced his new cabinet. ONHRI consultations resulted in the drafting of the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) Bill which replaced OHRHI. The NPRC is discussed in Chapter Eight which focuses on justice and peace initiatives in addressing Gukurahundi.

made any strong efforts in this regard. Various authors have argued that only sparse and ad hoc arrangements have been made to address this issue – mainly, blanket amnesties being offered as a means to encourage peaceful solutions. However, blanket amnesty processes tend to free armed personnel from their responsibilities for Gukurahundi violence, at the expense of affected citizenry, who walk the streets with their tormentors and/or are even governed by them. For example, after the signing of the 1987 Unity Accord, amnesty was granted to the 3,500 members of the Fifth Brigade and 122 dissidents. In fact, Eppel notes that “the 1988 amnesty was one in a long line of amnesties since 1979 and is part of an established pattern of perpetrators being pardoned at the expense of victims”.<sup>73</sup> She goes on to say that by the year 2000 Zimbabwe had issued more than five amnesties. These amnesties are an example of how the state institutionalises and produces silences. Ironically, Zimbabwe’s Human Rights Commission Act of 2012 and Zimbabwe’s Constitution, approved ahead of the 2013 elections, prevent commissioners from dealing with any political violence committed before 2009 and grant amnesty for human rights abuses committed before this time. By so doing, they have thus ensured that Gukurahundi crimes cannot be tried within Zimbabwe.

Gukurahundi ended when PF-ZAPU was eventually folded into ZANU-PF in 1987 after the Unity Accord was signed. Todd argues that the Unity Accord was a forced agreement which “consisted of ten points that left no breathing space for any democratic values in Zimbabwe”.<sup>74</sup> A close reading of the points shows that PF-ZAPU was to gain nothing of significance from such “unity” (and would in fact lose its political clout), while ZANU-PF gained everything. Officially, the Zimbabwean state cites the Unity Accord as the document which provides evidence of the fact that they consider Gukurahundi to have been adequately addressed, and thus it should now be a closed chapter.<sup>75</sup> Ndlovu-Gatsheni asserts that the Unity accord

signed between PF-ZAPU and ZANU-PF on 22 December 1987 amounted to nothing less than a surrender document where the PF-ZAPU politicians threw in the towel and allowed PF-ZAPU to be swallowed by ZANU-PF. The only positive result was that the (Gukurahundi) atrocities stopped.<sup>76</sup>

Eppel, like Ndlovu-Gatsheni, points out that through the Unity Accord

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<sup>73</sup> Eppel, “‘Gukurahundi’: The Need for Truth and Reparation”, 50.

<sup>74</sup> Judith Garfield Todd, *Through the Darkness: A Life in Zimbabwe* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2007), 235.

<sup>75</sup> At the 2018 World Economic Forum (23 – 26 January), newly appointed President Mnangagwa once again personally reiterated this view that the Unity Accord ended and absolved Gukurahundi.

<sup>76</sup> Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni, “Rethinking ‘Chimurenga’ and ‘Gukurahundi’ in Zimbabwe: A Critique of Partisan National History,” *African Studies Review: The Journal of the African Studies Association* 55, no. 3 (2012), 1.

ZAPU was simply given a few seats in the ZANU government, ZAPU ceased to exist as a separate party ... followed a few months later by blanket amnesty, in April 1988, and the creation of a de-facto one party state.<sup>77</sup>

The Unity Accord thus tells the story of how ZANU became the official and only real party which was allowed to exist in Zimbabwe.

The following section details the central argument along with the research objectives that guided the study.

## **1.2 Research Objectives**

Whilst this chapter has provided – as subsequent chapters will also continue to provide – some historical documentation of events before, during, and after the Gukurahundi period, a key focus is on the post-Gukurahundi memory and its legacies.

The main question that this thesis seeks to address is: how has state denial and produced silences of Gukurahundi shaped survivor memories across generations; and contributed to justice in independent Zimbabwe?

To that end, the thesis has the following three research objectives:

1. To record and highlight memories of Gukurahundi, as narrated by survivors and other actors.
2. To discuss Gukurahundi memories as part of the various memory debates within the discipline, which include silenced memories (or memories of silence); gendered memory making; the sites/spaces and geographies of memory; as well as the linkages across intergenerational memories of Gukurahundi.
3. To trace the nexus between memory and justice (or healing) as a result of this atrocity; as well as other Gukurahundi initiatives to address the occurrence.

## **1.3 Motivation/Significance of the Study**

With reference to the historical narrative of Gukurahundi, this research study makes a significant contribution in a number of ways:

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<sup>77</sup> Eppel, “‘Gukurahundi’: The Need for Truth and Reparation”, 46.

First, my foremost contribution through this study is to clearly locate, ascertain, and discuss the veracity of viewing Gukurahundi within the context of genocide. Increasingly, and in the wake of human rights discourses, the politics surrounding the naming of Gukurahundi, or rather what Gukurahundi is termed as, have become evident for several reasons. As this is a memory study, it is interesting to analyse whether Gukurahundi's naming as genocide (or as something else) has bearing on the type of memories, as well as select stories/experiences, that participants choose to focus on over others.

As briefly discussed earlier, characteristic of a genocide is the idea that it is a one-sided war carried out by the state against unarmed citizenry with the intention, through certain acts, of destroying in part, or in whole, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group.<sup>78</sup> Some, such as Genocide Watch, assert that this fully encapsulates what happened to the citizenry of Midlands and the Matabelelands between 1982 and 1987. In fact, Genocide Watch officially declared Gukurahundi to be a genocide and a crime against humanity in 2010. Incidentally, and only recently in Zimbabwe, Matabeleland activists continue to be embroiled in the process of petitioning and lobbying the governments of South Africa, the United States (US), and the United Kingdom (UK) to officially recognise Gukurahundi as a genocide, all in a bid to garner some international support towards addressing it.<sup>79</sup> This exercise has not led to any real impact. The Government of Zimbabwe, specifically former President Robert Mugabe and now incumbent President Emmerson Mnangagwa, do not refer to Gukurahundi as a genocide. Mugabe's most commonly referenced and trifling admission of Gukurahundi's occurrence was at Joshua Nkomo's memorial service on 2 July 2000, where he stated that thousands were killed in what was a "moment of madness".<sup>80</sup>

The Government of Zimbabwe's counterargument to terming Gukurahundi as genocide is that Gukurahundi was very much a two-sided war, with dissidents in the Matabelelands clearly fighting against, and hoping to undermine, the state (or Robert Mugabe's new regime at independence) through combat. The estimated 20,000+ citizens killed in the process and 400,000+ who were displaced were merely casualties of war. However, Phimister argues that this cannot be referred to as a two-sided war, as even the scale of the threat posed by the dissident activity was greatly exaggerated and, in fact, the violence was really experienced by the rural civilian population as opposed to combatants specifically.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> A. Lupel and E. Verdeja, *Responding to Genocide: The Politics of International Action*. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2013), 159.

<sup>79</sup> Push to declare Gukurahundi a Genocide on [www.newsday.co.zw](http://www.newsday.co.zw) last accessed on 20 October 2013.

<sup>80</sup> P. Stiff, *Cry Zimbabwe: Independence – Twenty Years On* (Johannesburg: Galago Publishing, 2000).

<sup>81</sup> Phimister, "Zimbabwe is Mine", 47

While researchers writing about this atrocity have generally been cautious in referring to it as a genocide, there has been a lot of other terminology used, such as “the Gukurahundi civil strife”, “the Gukurahundi massacres”, “the Gukurahundi crimes against humanity”, and “politicide”, amongst others, to describe it. In this regard, there is a deliberate packaging or choice of words where Gukurahundi is concerned, in the absence of consensus on what it is. Additionally, in a country where the “perpetrator” is predominantly producing silences around Gukurahundi, it would be difficult to label it a genocide, but easier to defer to softer or muted phrases. In this context, an important contribution of this study will be to understand how this perception of Gukurahundi as a genocide (or not) has contributed to the memory of Gukurahundi of survivors.

Even if Gukurahundi is not a genocide, using genocide labels/discourses may be beneficial for many survivors to survive and to gain recognition, etc. This raises a central memory issue: how and why language/discourse that is historically inaccurate or misleading can nevertheless still be meaningful for many marginalised/oppressed peoples?

Second, this study has significance as it addresses Gukurahundi specifically within the wider discourse of memory studies and brings a variety of memory debates and ideas to the fore. According to Grasse and Jirous:

memory is an active and selective process of the reconstruction of the past placed within the context of socio-political occurrences and the historical narrative.<sup>82</sup>

Whilst the theory of memory is discussed in greater depth in chap. 5, here I want to introduce the reader to some basic concepts of memory. Memory is not necessarily history; in the same way that history is not necessarily memory. As Jelin asserts: “memory is by no means identical to history”.<sup>83</sup> The two have a dialectic synergy and thus inform each other, and they can certainly manipulate each other’s views at multiple levels and through diverse relationships. In further trying to explain their differentiation, Jelin goes on thus:

memory is a crucial source to history, and this includes particularly the distortions, displacements and negations that characterize it ~ in this sense, memory functions as a stimulus for the development of the agenda for historical research.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> M. Grasse, and D. Jirous. *Gender in Peacebuilding: History, Memory and Conflict Dynamics*. an excerpt from ‘Gender in Peacebuilding: Pedagogical Ideas and Experiences’. Dare Blue Lines Conference Documentation: Berlin, 29-30 May 2009. [Online]. Available: [www.dare-network.eu](http://www.dare-network.eu), 17.

<sup>83</sup> J. E. Jelin, “State Repression and the Struggles for Memory” in E. Jelin (eds.), *History and Social Memory* (London: Latin American Bureau, 2003), 56.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*



In African history we find that most memory studies are conducted with oral history as the vehicle of research. Indeed, several authors working within the African context and highlighting the nexus between memory/history/violence, have tended to undertake memory studies through the research medium of oral tradition and oral historiography. They include: Werbner; Alexander, McGregor, and Ranger; White, Miescher, and Cohen; as well as Vancina.<sup>85</sup> As such, this study carries significance because of the wealth of oral history theory and practice observations which came out of the fieldwork - particularly the ethical aspects of researching conflict-affected settings, or what is also referred to as crisis oral history. Through these research methodologies, individual and collective memories are collated and analysed. It is important to note that according to memory theory – as can be observed in Portelli’s discussion – a testimony can never be the same twice as “even the same interviewer gets different versions from the same narrator at different times”.<sup>86</sup> In this regard, Portelli highlights the notion that people are indefinite in what they see, hear, as well as in what they process. Memory making is thus an unlimited venture occupying temporal space. As such, it is never conclusive. The importance of studying memory and history is to demystify the idea that one kind of memory or type of history (official and unofficial) ought to exist to the exclusion of others - as opposed to in tandem with each other.<sup>87</sup>

Amongst various types of memory, Gukurahundi is significant as the silence around its occurrence and its silencing means that it could potentially resurge, precipitate, and/or amplify latent conflict. The fact that citizens, mainly from the Matabelelands and Midlands, continue to live with unresolved feelings and are disengaged from socio-economic and political affairs in the country, is an issue that beckons attention and calls into question nation-building efforts in Zimbabwe.<sup>88</sup> Whilst many (e.g., the CCJP) have conducted their work on Gukurahundi largely with the aim of breaking the silence around it, this research takes it further based on the realisation that breaking the silence alone is insufficient on such an emotional issue. What then happens to memory, even after the occurrence has been brought to light or made prominent? Issues of

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<sup>85</sup> Werbner, Richard P. *Tears of the Dead: the Social Biography of an African Family*. Harare: Baobab Books, 1992.; See Alexander et al., *Violence and Memory*; See White, Luise., Miescher, Stephan., and Cohen, David William. *African Words, African Voices: Critical Practices in Oral History* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001.; See Vansina, Yan. *Oral Tradition as History*. London: James Currey, 1985.

<sup>86</sup> Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1991), 55.

<sup>87</sup> L. Buur, “Monumental Historical Memory: Managing Truth in the Everyday Work of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission” in D. Posel and G. Simpson (eds.), *Commissioning the Past: Understanding South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2002), 75 - 76

<sup>88</sup> Such as anger, bitterness and fear. In his book *The Fear*, 2010 Godwin shares some experiences of conversations which he had with a myriad of people including ex-ZIPRA liberation army recruits, victims of Gukurahundi and many others who still relive the experience and have recollections of Bhalagwe, in Matopos (one of the largest torture camps of the Gukurahundi army and home to several unmarked mass graves). They corroborate these sentiments, and particularly bring to light the distrust and anger which is still experienced by many. Interviews conducted by Ndlovu-Gatsheni as well as those highlighted in the CCJP report all provide evidence of the same reality.

memory will continue to hold relevance. For instance, the oral (and usually highly impassioned as well as subjective) memory of Gukurahundi and its sentiments are being passed down from generation to generation; and continue to take root amongst a growing number of disgruntled youths who are inflamed, seek answers, and carry pain as a direct consequence of the burden that Gukurahundi left them with. In this regard, studying Gukurahundi is not simply a history of the past, but it very much has different meanings within and across generations in the present.

Further, research on Gukurahundi has tended to focus on capturing the memory of the atrocity without necessarily being forward looking. This study will make a contribution because it not only maps out Gukurahundi but also provides a thread linking the generational distance, by analysing the memory of first-generation Gukurahundi survivors and the post-memory of the second generation, i.e. those that were not born or were too young to even have any recollection of Gukurahundi.<sup>89</sup> For instance, Ndlovu-Gatsheni highlights the Mthwakazi Action Group on Ethnic Cleansing in the Matabelelands and Midlands, and the Mthwakazi People's Congress as examples of pro-secessionist groups.<sup>90</sup> Largely located in the diaspora and living under difficult circumstances – many as refugees – we continue to see how, through the creation of virtual communities, these citizens are advocating for the self-determination of Ndebele peoples through an autonomous United Mthwakazi Republic (UMR). Their views are contentious and inflamed in outlook. This highlights that there is a collective consciousness and thought process taking place. The sheer numbers that these cyberspace forums attract are telling in themselves. Other memory gleanings made throughout this thesis include the nexus between memory and identity/citizenship; gendered memory making; “linguaging” memory; as well as the sites/spaces and geographies of Gukurahundi memory.

Gukurahundi is important because it highlights discussions around the concepts of justice, peace, and healing. We currently reside in an era where international justice systems are channels through which human rights abuses and crimes against humanity can be tried.<sup>91</sup> Gukurahundi needs to be looked at through the lens that there is now greater access to these structures; where

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<sup>89</sup> The term post memory was first phrased by Marianne Hirsch in an article on Art Spiegelman's *Maus* in the early 1990's. She has continually defined it over the years. A further discussion on this terminology will ensue during the course of the study.

<sup>90</sup> Ndlovu-Gatsheni, “Rethinking Chimurenga and Gukurahundi”.

<sup>91</sup> Such as the International Criminal Court, the International Court of Justice, the Southern African Development Community Tribunal, and the African Court of Human Rights,; also see An example is Charles Taylor, the former Liberian president, who was tried by the Special Court for his contribution to protracting and exacerbating the Sierra Leone civil war (which began in March 1991 and ended ten years later) through supporting the rebel group Revolutionary United Front in various ways, including the supply of arms, illegal exchanges and use of natural resources, the conscription of children into the rebel movement and other recorded human rights abuses. He received a 50-year sentence for these war crimes in May 2012, several years after the occurrence of this war. Based on this example, Gukurahundi should not be exempted from trial under this type of justice system.

citizenry are able to circumvent national systems (which may fail to be just) and address their concerns through such mediums which did not previously exist, or better still, create reforms which are culturally sensitive and have indigenous relevance. It is worth noting that according to Zimbabwe's approved Constitution (as at March 2013), former President Robert Mugabe (and now President Emmerson Mnangagwa) are absolved of Gukurahundi crimes, as chap. 6.11 on presidential immunity states:

Except with the leave of the Constitutional Court, no civil or criminal proceedings may be instituted against the President in his or her personal capacity for things done or omitted to be done before he or she became President or while he or she is President.<sup>92</sup>

In light of this clause, the study will highlight and/or give recognition to the work being done by various actors outside of state initiative.

Lastly, personal accounts of Gukurahundi as told to me by various sources (from a tender age) motivated me to conduct this research. In studying Gukurahundi, I hope to gain a better understanding of it, and to make sense of the occurrence – especially as it has always been characterised by a variety of emotions and nuances. Through this interdisciplinary and insightful study, I believe that I can play a part towards documenting ordinary people's stories.

## **1.4 Chapter Outline**

Chap. 2 outlines the research design, methodology, and ethical considerations which guided the research process, with a view to fulfilling the research objectives.

Chap. 3 highlights the demographics of the research participants. Thereafter select vignettes or interview summaries are shared. The chapter concludes with a section, in which I offer reflections and share observations on the fieldwork experience and research journey.

Chap. 4 focuses on general narratives about Gukurahundi, as shared by participants (where possible, these are discussed against the existing literature on the topic). In this chapter, responses to questions such as "What is Gukurahundi?"; "Where did it happen?"; "Who were the actors involved?"; "What was the impact of Gukurahundi?", etc. are offered.

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<sup>92</sup>COPAC (Constitution Select Committee), *Draft Constitution of the Republic of Zimbabwe*. 2013, [Online]. Available: [www.copac.org.zw](http://www.copac.org.zw)

Chap. 5 focuses on the linkages between silence and memory, or silencing memory. Here, the state denial of Gukurahundi is discussed in greater detail. Thereafter certain aspects of memory are discussed, such as delineating whose memories matter across survivor, perpetrator, and bystander binaries; as well as the temporality of memory.

Chap. 6 focuses on the literature on gender and memory, and attempts to link this theory to participants' memories as shared through a gendered lens. It also draws attention to the sites and spaces of Gukurahundi memory.

Chap. 7 highlights debates about the existence of family and historical generations, and whether this impacts the way that memories of Gukurahundi are told and experienced across generations.

Chap. 8 turns attention to how participants survive(d) Gukurahundi and how they are coping in its aftermath. Survivors discuss the justice mechanisms which they would like to see being put in place in response to Gukurahundi, against what the Government of Zimbabwe has (or has not) set up with regard to providing justice. The chapter ends by drawing attention to select memorialisation's and justice initiatives, which various groups or individuals have engaged in as a means to work through their sentiments, amidst state denial.

Chap. 9 offers a comprehensive summary of this oral history PhD study and threads together or synthesises ideas emanating from the central argument and the various research objectives of the thesis. It draws conclusions for these discussions as obtained from both theory and survivor stories.

## CHAPTER 2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter speaks to the design and methodology that guided the research. It highlights the qualitative nature of the study as guided by oral historiography theory and methodology, specifically with regard to interview strategies and planning, amongst other things. Furthermore, ethical considerations are noted, and attention is paid to discussing the limitations of the study.

### 2.2 Research Design and Methodology

The research design takes a qualitative approach in the specific use of oral history methodology. Shopes asserts that oral history as a concept goes as far back as the late 1930s to the early 1940s – a time when the tape recorder became accessible and thus resulted in people beginning to see the value of recording first-hand accounts or experiences of the past.<sup>93</sup> Field states:

the technological development of portable, relatively cheap tape recorders was critical to the development of oral history in Europe in the 1970s and followed a similar trend in South Africa.<sup>94</sup>

Thompson similarly refers to this era as the digital revolution in oral history.<sup>95</sup>

In attempting to offer a definition of oral history, Shopes notes that it is a “maddeningly imprecise term”, used

to refer to formal, rehearsed accounts of the past presented by culturally sanctioned tradition-bearers; to inform conversations about “the old days” among family members, neighbours, or co-workers; to printed compilations of stories told about past times and present experiences; and to record interviews with individuals deemed to have an important story to tell.<sup>96</sup>

This definition by Shopes leads us to make several assumptions. First, the notion of oral history as a “maddeningly imprecise term” connotes that it is difficult to fully conceptualise, as it is an evolving concept covering a wide ambit and thus not always neatly definable. Indeed, Abrams in her analysis on oral history discourse transitions especially from the 1950’s to the new century, demonstrates a wide range of definitions, practices and transformations – which continue to

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<sup>93</sup> L Shopes, “Making Sense of Oral History,” 2002, 2, <http://historymatters.gmu.edu>.

<sup>94</sup> Sean Field, “Turning up the Volume: Dialogues about Memory Create Oral Histories,” *South African Historical Journal* 60, no. 2 (June 1, 2008).

<sup>95</sup> Alistair Thomson, “Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History Review,” *The Oral History Review* 34, no. 1 (January 1, 2007), 68–70.

<sup>96</sup> Shopes, “Making Sense of Oral History,” 1.

illustrate these ambiguities in both theory and process.<sup>97</sup> Second, oral history places value on linking the narrative of the past to the present and therefore is accessed through memory. And lastly, in Shopes' definition, the agency of this story lies with the individual teller (and/or the collective viewpoint), placing value on interactions with a variety of voices and participants. Furthermore, it highlights that there are a myriad of stories that can be narrated through oral historiography, some of a more formal discourse and others less formal.<sup>98</sup> Thus, oral history as research practice has much relevance to this thesis, as it will enable me to collate various oral stories – sometimes passed down intergenerationally – without them necessarily having belonged to the formal realm in the past.

Field also notes the following assumptions commonly associated with this discourse, whereby:

oral history [is viewed] as a supplement to historical research ... or where many archivists continue to define the role of oral history as “filling in the gaps of the archive” ... and therefore that oral history research will never influence or contradict the primacy of the written word.<sup>99</sup>

These quotes above highlight the nuances or the tensions between the oral and the written word, but at the same time reveal how porous and interconnected they both are.

In mapping out the discourse, Portelli highlights that there have been debates surrounding oral history methodologies for several reasons.<sup>100</sup> Many arguments hinge largely on oral history capturing “ordinary people’s” stories, voices, and experiences and thus seeing value in this type of telling in the same way that in the past, the evidence produced by scientific academic elites was sought. Field refers to these “ordinary voices” as the “views from below”.<sup>101</sup> In this regard, Nandy speaks of it as a recording of the “ahistorical”, whose knowledge base is often not dependent on the scientific, into history. He offers the following description in an attempt to explain who the ahistorical are.<sup>102</sup> He writes:

millions of people still live outside “history”. They do have theories of the past: they do believe that the past is important and shapes the present and the future, but they also recognise, confront, and live with a past different from that constructed by

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<sup>97</sup> Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London: Routledge, 2010). Some of the ambiguities and shifts she writes about are about include: a move from social history to cultural history; a shift from history towards historiography; and a shift from oral history as a narrative art towards it being an analytical practice.

<sup>98</sup> Paul Richard Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>99</sup> Sean Field, “Turning up the Volume: Dialogues about Memory Create Oral Histories,” *South African Historical Journal* 60, no. 2 (June 1, 2008), 3.

<sup>100</sup> Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories*.

<sup>101</sup> Field, “Turning up the Volume,” 4.

<sup>102</sup> Ashis Nandy, “History’s Forgotten Doubles,” *History and Theory* 34, no. 2 (1995): 44.

historians and historical consciousness. They even have a different way of arriving at the past.<sup>103</sup>

Portelli speaks of this as factual vs. artistic narratives, or else the educational vs. the traditional folk narratives.<sup>104</sup> Anderson and Jack note that increasingly, many of these ordinary people are women, who through a revision of oral historiography now have been incorporated as an integral part of these first-hand stories; whereas traditionally they were not given a space to speak and therefore were not heard.<sup>105</sup> Field highlights the crucial contribution that authors such as Bozzoli, Hofmeyr, James, and several others have made in this regard, within the Southern African context.<sup>106</sup> This is a key contribution to the oral history conversation especially as renowned authors such as Abrams (whilst relying to a large extent on Passerini and Portelli's work), are reliant and heavily slanted towards oral history practise and theory emanating from an anglo-saxon lens, to the exclusion of other parts of the world.<sup>107</sup> Thus, oral history is a progressive discourse, and its intersectionality makes it useable, beyond the confines of the historical field, across a range of disciplines. In this regard, Hamilton shows how oral historians have progressively focused on, and carved out a niche in research design and methodology - referred to as African oral history or African history. This it to ensure that methodologically, the African context of practicing oral history is not predetermined or guided by a Western reality in a manner sometimes not relatable to its own environment.<sup>108</sup> Of these variant contexts, Stoler reiterates how oral history as a cultural history

is about the graphic, detailed production of social kinds and ways of knowing that mutated and could morph as political interests changed.<sup>109</sup>

She further argues that science and reason alone are not enough to tackle these oral historiographic aspects.<sup>110</sup>

Therefore, the strength of oral history methodology is that it continues to create inclusivity and not only transforms itself as a discipline, but is also transformative. For instance, oral history methodologies across disciplines within the South African context were synonymous with being

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<sup>103</sup> Ashis Nandy, "History's Forgotten Doubles," *History and Theory* 34, no. 2 (1995): 44.

<sup>104</sup> Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories*.

<sup>105</sup> K. Anderson and D.C. Jack, "Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses" in S. Gluck and P. Patai (eds.), *Women's Words, The Feminist Practice of Oral History* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

<sup>106</sup> Field, "Turning up the Volume", 4.

<sup>107</sup> Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>108</sup> Carolyn Hamilton, "'Living by Fluidity': Oral Histories, Material Custodies and the Politics of Archiving," in *Refiguring the Archive*, ed. Carolyn Hamilton et al. (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2002).

<sup>109</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, "Epistemic Politics: Ontologies of Colonial Common Sense," *Philosophical Forum* 39, no. 3 (2008), 360.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

a “cultural tool of struggle” – and which liberated the marginalised – during apartheid.<sup>111</sup> Nandy highlights that by way of inclusiveness and being transformative, it is a priority to bring the ahistorical into history.<sup>112</sup> Additionally, Field highlights the various debates and ongoing changes within this discourse, where it was decided, for instance, “at the 1987 oral history conference at Oxford that the way oral history was theorised and practiced could no longer exclude various forms of myth-making as part of historical research”.<sup>113</sup> Although myth-making has often been associated with misinformation and manipulation of oral history, it is still a very common lens through which orality is shared.<sup>114</sup> In a similar vein, Nandy states:

Mythologization is also moralization; it involves a refusal to separate the remembered past from its ethical meaning in the present. For this refusal, it is often important not to remember the past, objectively, clearly or in its entirety.<sup>115</sup>

Interestingly, myth-making comes up often in the sharing of Gukurahundi memory and is understood as a way in which participants make meaning or talk about events around them. A methodology that factors mythicization into account, as a legitimate aspect found in shared narratives, has much relevance and practicality for this study.

Field notes that “oral history research ‘documents’ are produced through dialogues about memory”.<sup>116</sup> The thesis of his argument in this regard is that oral history is a non-recoverable and open-ended project created through inter-subjective dialogue; and that if theorised accordingly, can offer new insights into various aspects of memory.

Some historians have thus been apprehensive of this oral history discourse because it is difficult to standardise and is prone to subjectivity. Nandy puts it aptly when he says “history fears ambiguity”.<sup>117</sup> To this, Portelli concedes that the nature of oral history tells one “less about the event, and more about the meaning behind the occurrence”, resulting in it not being easily verifiable.<sup>118</sup> Indeed, no two oral history accounts of the same incident can ever be the same – be this at the individual or at the collective level. A comprehensive look at several narrations of the death of an Italian worker named ‘Luigi Trastulli’ in Portelli’s work confirms this assertion to be true. These narrations show that several persons observing the same incident reported it in

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<sup>111</sup> Field, “Turning up the Volume”, 5.

<sup>112</sup> Nandy, “History’s Forgotten Doubles,” 44.

<sup>113</sup> Field, “Turning up the Volume”.

<sup>114</sup> Erin Jessee, “The Limits of Oral History: Ethics and Methodology Amid Highly Politicized Research Settings,” *The Oral History Review* 38, no. 2 (September 1, 2011), 676.

<sup>115</sup> Nandy, “History’s Forgotten Doubles,” 47.

<sup>116</sup> Field, “Turning up the Volume”.

<sup>117</sup> Nandy, “History’s Forgotten Doubles,” 48.

<sup>118</sup> Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories*, 55.



various different ways, and across many different historical timeframes.<sup>119</sup> Portelli's notes that an oral history testimony can never be the same twice, as "even the same interviewer gets different versions from the same narrator at different times".<sup>120</sup> Jessee's contribution in this regard is that "there are limits to oral history, particularly when studying in highly politicised research settings, and that this ultimately affects the course and outcomes of the fieldwork."<sup>121</sup> She shares some of these limitations as experienced during her fieldwork experience in the aftermath of atrocities in Rwanda and Bosnia, and gives several examples, such as her struggle with

[t]he ethics of democratizing history when working amid complex political actors whose narratives were often intended to delegitimize their governments ... or spread genocidal propaganda.<sup>122</sup>

In this way there were thus ethical and spatial limits in her practice of oral history methodology.

Whilst often conflated, there are clear differences and distinctions between oral history and oral traditions. Field highlights that oral traditions are lived realities, which include the exchange of stories about the past in one's day to day life. However, oral history is distinct from oral traditions in that it is not just about conversing about lived realities (as oral traditions are likely to be). Rather, oral history is a research practice.<sup>123</sup> When a researcher understands oral history as method, practice, and theory, it starts to have bearing on a myriad of aspects, such as the study's project design; the researcher's interview skills; and even how s/he interprets and uses the knowledge shared by participants responsibly. Oral historiography as research, thus, guided my fieldwork and write-up process.

Oral history, together with all these other sources and their production of knowledge, provides one with a complex multi-positional and multi-perspective way of analysing historical memory. This research encapsulates interdisciplinary studies which incorporate historical, political, and anthropological paradigms. Together they address various concepts and aspects of memory and justice. I engage multiple sources and techniques for gathering data, such as desktop research, newspaper clippings, document analysis and documentaries, over and above the life histories and thematic oral history interviews conducted with participants to the research. Where possible

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<sup>119</sup> Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories*, 55.

<sup>120</sup> Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories*.

<sup>121</sup> Erin Jessee, "The Limits of Oral History: Ethics and Methodology amid Highly Politicized Settings," in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks (London: Routledge, 2015), 675.

<sup>122</sup> Jessee, "The Limits of Oral History", 683.

<sup>123</sup> Field, "Turning up the Volume", 7.

(though minimally due to their being embargoed documents), I highlight other sources in order to achieve the goal of being rigorous.

In the next section, I begin to highlight the interview process followed for this research.

Portelli asserts that the role of the oral historian is crucial, for example, in the selection of participants and the type of questions that are asked; and often determines the narration of the story, and thus its credibility.<sup>124</sup> In light of this, I drew on oral history texts, such as Slim and Thompson's *Listening for a Change* (1993), which guided the planning of my fieldwork and informed several aspects of the research, such as the manner in which I framed my interview questions.<sup>125</sup> In addition, Field draws attention to the practice of oral history, noting that part of oral history cognisance and practice requires a reflection of power dynamics between the researcher and the researched, as researchers are wont to be dominant.<sup>126</sup> This speaks to the example given by Vansina, in which he is critical of the dominance of "white interview techniques and sample selection" in many African contexts in the 1980s - which he believed ended up not being culturally suitable as a foreign mode of inquiry, and thus were a neglect of methodology.<sup>127</sup>

The sense(s) of agency, location, composure, identity and other socially constructed self-insights that an interviewee *might* acquire through the interview process is useful not only to the interviewee but provides crucial avenues for interpretation and analysis.<sup>128</sup>

To this end, Anderson and Jack as well as Carton and Vis offer comprehensive interviewing and analytical techniques on how to "do history", with the idea that if the researcher is able to follow fundamental oral historiography methodology, then it enhances the veracity of that research.<sup>129</sup> To this end, Anderson and Jack as well as Carton and Vis offer comprehensive interviewing and analytical techniques on how to "do history", with the idea that if the researcher is able to follow fundamental oral historiography methodology, then it enhances the veracity of that research.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories*.

<sup>125</sup> Hugo Slim and Paul Thompson, "Ways of Listening: The Art of Collecting Testimony," in *Listening for a Change: Oral Testimony and Development*, ed. Olivia Bennett and Nigel Cross (London: Panos, 1993).

<sup>126</sup> Field, "Turning up the Volume", 4.

<sup>127</sup> Hamilton, "Living by Fluidity," 209.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>129</sup> Louise Vis and Benedict Carton, "Doing Oral History," in *Oral History in a Wounded Country: Interactive Interviewing in South Africa*, ed. Philippe Denis and Radikobo Ntsimane (Scottsville, South Africa: University Of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2008) ; Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack, "Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses," ed. Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai (New York: Routledge, 1991).

<sup>130</sup> Louise Vis and Benedict Carton, "Doing Oral History," in *Oral History in a Wounded Country: Interactive Interviewing in South Africa*, ed. Philippe Denis and Radikobo Ntsimane (Scottsville, South Africa: University Of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2008) ; Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack, "Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses," ed. Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai (New York: Routledge, 1991).

Sheftel and Zembrzycki discuss that the cognisance of power dynamics within interviews should be more than expected methodological practice for oral historians, but also highlight that it should be a compulsory aspect of research ethics.<sup>131</sup> They also note that between the interviewer and the narrator, these power dynamics are a source of anxiety in themselves – which should be strongly recognised - and that ethical researchers should continually strive to find ways of creating equality in interview spaces.<sup>132</sup>

A pre-sampling process was undertaken, in which I decided on appropriate actors to approach for the 30 in-depth interviews that were conducted. Due to the precise nature of the research, the interviewees fell within a non-probability purposive framework, more specifically, a snowball sample type where select people were identified for the research, and they in turn recommended other participants.<sup>133</sup> The sample size grew as a result of this methodology. While one cannot predetermine the demographics of participants in a snowballing framework, I paid attention to certain variables such as gender, age, and language (among others), with a view to having as diverse a sample as possible. Participants whose location was accessible were considered a first priority.

- Life history interviews were suitable for older generations who largely experienced or lived through the struggle for independence, and survived Gukurahundi, and thus had a longer view of these occurrences.
- Thematic oral history interviews were applied for the second generation aspect of the study.
- Semi-structured interviews were specifically designed for one or two key stakeholders who were also interviewed. Examples of these actors include academics; as well as developmental and humanitarian organisations, including faith-based institutions (as they have played a huge role in the country's peace and reconciliation initiatives).

The interviews were one-on-one sessions because the sharing of individual memory could not be done in a collective space. Every participant needed to feel free and safe to tell their story without the discomfort that can be experienced in a larger group, especially when sensitive issues arose. As such, semi-structured schedules were developed for these interview sessions. I always strived, as Jesse highlights, to “empower the interviewees by encouraging them to take the lead in the

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<sup>131</sup> Anna Sheftel and Stacey Zembrzycki, “Who’s Afraid of Oral History? Fifty Years of Debates and Anxiety About Ethics”, *The Oral History Review* 43, no. 2 (2016), 347.

<sup>132</sup> Anna Sheftel and Stacey Zembrzycki, “Who’s Afraid of Oral History? Fifty Years of Debates and Anxiety About Ethics”, *The Oral History Review* 43, no. 2 (2016), 347.

<sup>133</sup> A. S. De Vos, *Research at Grass Roots: For the Social Sciences and Human Services Professions* (Van Schaik, 2002), 207.

conversation” as they hold power from having been there, and therefore to let them tell their experience in their own way.<sup>134</sup>

Interviews were recorded on a Dictaphone. I further relied on a journal as a tool to take extra intuitive notes of the interviews. Intriguingly, oral history is not just about the spoken. It is also about the silences or the unspoken (non-verbalised). In this regard, as noted by Hofmeyr, oral history is more than just about orality, and it should factor in other nuanced aspects, such as orality and “styles of speaking” or “performing words”, which ultimately influence or construct the dialogue.<sup>135</sup>

Anyone who has experienced the transcription of oral interviews can testify, the spoken word does not submissively follow the laws of grammar and syntax.<sup>136</sup>

This journal was also an instrument in which I detailed my reflections and experiences throughout the research process.

Ritchie substantiates Portelli and Shopes’ argument when he observes that verification issues in oral historiography methodology are compounded by the reality that audio-taped oral history accounts must be translated into transcripts in order to be analysed.<sup>137</sup> There are issues of content and context that are lost in translation through this means, thus making oral history less credible in instances – especially when it is understood within the narrow confines of language and words. However, a more severe consequence of this methodology is that the transcript (as the written text) has tended to be promoted as a purer or a more preferred form of oral history, over the actual audio recording. However, authors such as Portelli and Shopes continue to stress the audio recording as being epistemologically more important. Naturally, as with any research method, oral history has its strengths and weaknesses (for example, it is strong on ‘depth’ and weak on ‘width’ research dynamics).<sup>138</sup>

The life histories and other thematic interviews for this research were translated (when interviews were conducted in the local language, isiNdebele) and transcribed through a process which involved listening to each session and typing it out verbatim. This material was coded using the electronic resource base NVivo, which is a useful and well-renowned tool for theming, categorising, and sub-categorising qualitative material, in line with the main research objectives.

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<sup>134</sup> Jessee, “The Limits of Oral History: Ethics and Methodology amid Highly Politicized Settings,” 679.

<sup>135</sup> Field, “Turning up the Volume,” June 1, 2008, 7.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>137</sup> Donald A Ritchie, “Introduction: The Evolution of Oral History,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History*, ed. Donald A Ritchie (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1-18.; Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories*; Shopes, “Making Sense of Oral History.”

<sup>138</sup> Field, “Turning up the Volume,” June 1, 2008, 7.

This information was then compared and analysed against theory to provide discussion and findings for the study associated with the formation of Gukurahundi memory; and in line with key research tenets.

## **2.3 Ethical Considerations**

Several ethical considerations guided the process of this study. They were largely obtained from De Vos and Babbie's contributions to ethical qualitative research methods.<sup>139</sup>

### **2.3.1 Consent**

Individual and institutional consent was sought from the relevant participants through prior communication – telephonically, electronically, and in person (where possible) – in order to conduct the research. All communication processes were documented.

In communicating with participants, I stated the purpose of the research and addressed any other issues or questions raised by the participants. This process culminated in the signing of an informed consent form before the interview commenced, along with a release form from the Centre of Popular Memory at the end of the interview. (For purposes of anonymity, I have not availed these consent and release forms as part of the appendices – although they will be archived in the future). In addition, even after participants had signed consent forms, they were reminded at the beginning of the interviews that they would not be forced to do anything against their will. The participants were thus permitted to withdraw from the research at any point, if they felt uncomfortable with the process.

### **2.3.2 Confidentiality**

Participants' details were kept anonymous through pseudonyms, so that their real identities were not compromised – unless participants or institutions specifically requested to be identified. As a result of this, I was not able to use the information obtained from two high-level ZAPU members, as pseudonyms were not sufficient to conceal their identity as sources. They were privy to information that very few people had and thus including their contributions would have immediately compromised their identities. Therefore, I eventually referred largely to 28 interviews out of the original 30 interviews conducted. Furthermore, recorded material was treated with respect and stored safely where no one else had access to it.

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<sup>139</sup> A. S De Vos, *Research at Grass Roots: For the Social Sciences and Human Services Professions* (Pretoria: Van Schaik, 2005), 62–63; Earl R Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research* (Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2004), 67–69.

### **2.3.3 Competency**

The recording sessions did not harm the participants in any way, since the issues and information which emerged out of the research process were dealt with sensitively. Additionally, from the onset, I aimed to produce knowledge, as well as accurately represent the views and sentiments shared by participants throughout the research process. Indeed, individuals and institutions that participated in the study were able to access transcripts of their interviews for further corroboration, as well as copies of the final report upon request.

At a broader level of ethical research, I ensured that I was well informed about the University's policy on plagiarism and the principles underpinning it. I undertook to acknowledge other people's contributions and cite them accordingly. Furthermore, through rigorous consultation with, and direction from, my supervisors – Sean Field and Maanda Mulaudzi – I ensured that conducting this study did not compromise the image of the University of Cape Town or any other institution(s) affiliated with this research. Therefore, there were no illegalities which occurred as a result of conducting this study.

All theses at UCT go through a rigorous ethics review. This study was not exempt to the rule. At conception, I wrote an ethics report which was cleared by the Department of Historical Studies, the Humanities Faculty as well as went through the Doctoral Degrees Board in order for me to be allowed to conduct this research. Additionally, with every new admission year, the ethics of the study were often reviewed – and this was necessary because of the need to factor in the reality of the conflict-ridden context along with the emotionally-laden aspect involved with interviewing survivors of violence.

## **2.4 Limitations to the Study**

### **2.4.1 Limitations of Research Design and Methodology**

It has already been highlighted that the nature of qualitative research is such that the findings can be based on one's interpretation of participants' words and actions. The interpretation may be subjective or biased and is sometimes based on misunderstood information. Contrasting and synthesising multiple views from oral, written, and visual sources reduces this considerably. Additionally, interviews – as one vehicle for conducting qualitative research – are intense and can be a protracted process. Qualitative interviews mean that one is not able to get large pools of participants as one could, perhaps, in a quantitative study. Using one-on-one interviews, I was

not able (because of the constraints of time) to interview more than 30 people. These interviews alone spanned over the course of two-and-a-half years. However, I am satisfied with the knowledge I received from the 30 interviews and believe that they had depth and offer more than enough content to carry this study adequately.

#### **2.4.2 Limitations of the Sample**

The disadvantage of using a snowball sampling framework is that it usually lacks diversity, as it tends to represent a like-minded school of thought and experience. It means that I was not always able to deliberately control the demographics of the study.

Furthermore, I faced challenges in terms of accessing participants for the study who were able to speak of Gukurahundi. For instance, because of the trauma, some survivors did not want to revisit the atrocity. Also, there were issues of fear, and thus an unwillingness to speak. The lengthy time lapse since the actual occurrence of Gukurahundi further resulted in participants having clouded recollections. There were also some issues of trust in speaking to me (a young researcher) about Gukurahundi.

#### **2.4.3 Limitations of Self**

I have an emotionally vested interest in this research, being of “Ndebele” ancestry. I must therefore note my positionality and my critical subjectivity in relation to the topic at hand. However, I would like to state clearly that throughout the journey, I continually strived to provide sufficient evidence and conscientious analysis. Whilst my positionality could be seen as a limitation, it also had strengths – in particular, my knowledge of the “people” and the “context” made me more easily acceptable to the community or the participants, and hopefully contributed towards their level of comfort and ease in telling their stories.

In the next chapter, the interview demographics and profiles of participants are presented. Thereafter select interview vignettes/summaries, as told by participants, are shared, following which the chapter concludes with, a section dedicated to my personal reflections on the experience of fieldwork for this research study.

## CHAPTER 3. INTERVIEW VIGNETTES AND REFLECTIONS

### 3.1 Introduction

Chap. 3 is an extension of the previous chapter (chap. 2). Here, I familiarise the reader with the interview respondents of the study; I share seven interview synopses as told by participants;<sup>140</sup> and conclude by making reflections on the fieldwork process and the experiences I encountered along the way.

### 3.2 Interview Demographics

As discussed in the previous chapter, a snowball sampling methodology, whilst ideal for this research, meant that I was not able to control certain aspects of the demography of the interviewees' profile. Albeit, I still had a fairly decent spread, and a wide enough interview pool of participants to offer ample gleanings for the purposes of this research study. (See table 3.1 below for the demographics of the interviewees and related interview details). This table is also included as Appendix A at the end of the thesis, for further reference.

*Table 3. 1: Profile of Participants*

PARTICIPANTS*	AGE	GENDER	INTERVIEW LOCATION	DATE	PROFESSION
1. Katherine	50–55	Female	Bulawayo, Zimbabwe	Dec 2014 (1hr 10mins)	Civil society organisation (CSO)
2. Thobela Moyo	30–35	Male	Cape Town, South Africa	May 2014 (1hr 27mins)	Self-employed producer (creative arts)
3. Gogo MaMoyo	60–65	Female	Bulawayo	Dec 2014 (47mins)	Self-employed vendor selling vegetables, etc.
4. Sis' Siphos	40–45	Female	Bulawayo	Dec 2014 (1hr 30mins)	Employed at an NGO /CSO
5. Rasta	45–50	Male	Johannesburg, South Africa	Nov 2015 (2hrs)	Equestrian farmhand

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<sup>140</sup> These seven interviews out of a possible 30 were selected on an ad-hoc basis



<b>PARTICIPANTS*</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>GENDER</b>	<b>INTERVIEW LOCATION</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>PROFESSION</b>
6. Brian Nyathi	45–50	Male	Johannesburg	Nov 2015 (1hr 10mins)	Accountant at an NGO
7. Toto Nkosi (Toto)	50–55	Male	Cape Town	Jun 2015 (1hr 55mins)	Academic and entrepreneur
8. Jabulani Mpande	75–80	Male	Cape Town	Aug 2015 (3hrs 41mins)	Retired academic; ZAPU liberationist.
9. MaNcube	45–50	Female	Gwanda, Zimbabwe	Apr 2016 (1hr 7mins)	Subsistence farmer
10. Jonah Dube	45–50	Male	Gwanda	Apr 2016 (45mins)	Subsistence farmer
11. Gogo Thandeka	45–50	Female	Gwanda	Apr 2016 (31mins)	Subsistence farmer
12. Tshabalala	65–70	Male	Bulawayo	Apr 2016 (5hrs 13mins)	ZAPU liberationist; NGO sector
13. Themba Nkomo	55–60	Male	Bulawayo	Apr 2016 (1hr 52mins)	ZAPU liberationist; NGO sector
14. Zwelibanzi Malinga	40–45	Male	Bulawayo	Apr 2016 (40mins)	Employed in the NGO sector (advocacy)
15. Mama Keletso	55–60	Female	Bulawayo	Apr 2016 (2hrs 9mins)	ZAPU liberationist; self-employed (poultry)
16. MaMpofu	50–55	Female	Gwanda	Apr 2016 (45mins)	Housewife; Subsistence farmer
17. Mthombeni	60–65	Male	Gwanda	Apr 2016 (1hr 15mins)	Subsistence farmer
18. Mama ka Zonda	45–50	Female	Gwanda	Apr 2016 (1hr 7mins)	Housewife; Subsistence farmer

<b>PARTICIPANTS*</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>GENDER</b>	<b>INTERVIEW LOCATION</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>PROFESSION</b>
19. Hlabangana	50–55	Male	Gwanda	Apr 2016 (34mins)	Human rights activist; Subsistence farmer
20. Ngulube	55–60	Male	Bulawayo	May 2016 (1hr 55mins)	ZAPU liberationist; NGO sector
21. Maphosa	60–55	Male	Bulawayo	May 2016 (1hr)	ZAPU liberationist; retired army
22. Nkiwane	55–60	Male	Bulawayo	May 2016 (1hr 30mins)	ZAPU liberationist; retired army
23. Dungeni	60–65	Male	Bulawayo	May 2016 (1hr 16mins)	ZAPU liberationist; self-employed
24. Nobuhle Sithole	30–35	Female	Cape Town	May 2014 (1hr)	Human Resource management
25. Silas Dube	35–40	Male	Cape Town	May 2014 (45mins)	Academic
26. Mthimkhulu	60–65	Male	Cape Town	Jun 2016 (1hr 35mins)	Financial sector
27. Dube Senior	75–80	Male	Gwanda	Apr 2016 (45mins)	Subsistence farmer
28. Sis Langa	30–35	Female	Cape Town	Jun 2016, (1hr 23mins)	Academic & development

\* Pseudonyms are used.

An average life history interview for this study was planned to take approximately an hour-and-a-half in total. However, there were certain outliers to this framework, as can be seen in table 3.1. The two longest interviews – no. 12 Tshabalala (5hrs 13mins) and no.8 Jabulani Mpande (3hrs 41mins) – were both not held in one seating. Tshabalala's interviews were conducted over three different sessions, whereas Mpande's were conducted over two. I had easy access and proximity

to both these participants and thus could factor in this time. Additionally, they preferred not only to tell their stories based on their individual and direct Gukurahundi experiences, but also to intertwine this telling with the collective narrative dating from much earlier periods to date. They therefore (perhaps as a result of age) started their continuum of stories from afar back and dwelt on periods such as the formation of ZANU in 1963. This explains the protracted interview times, but it was fulfilling, as they were equally very informative sessions.

It must also be noted that the liberationists interviewed all particularly wanted to draw attention to their part in the Second Chimurenga War (Rhodesian Bush War) as an integral backstory to Gukurahundi. They also specifically tried to ensure that their telling enhanced the ZAPU (ZIPRA) history, which they felt had not been recorded enough, or which they believe has been silenced and remains absent from populist history.<sup>141</sup>

Nine out of 30 interviews were conducted outside of Zimbabwe's borders.<sup>142</sup> I certainly could tell the difference, as these interviews felt a little more relaxed and were without the underlying undertones of "fear", which some of the interviews in rural Zimbabwe had. It also did not feel as though participants censored themselves as much.

Of interest in table 3.1 is that participants MaNcube (no. 9) and Hlabangana (no. 19), along with MaMpofu (no. 16) and Mthombeni (no. 17) are wife and husband combinations; while Dube Senior (no. 27) and Jonah Dube (no. 10) are father and son respectively. Additionally, three of the interview participants from Gwanda are cousins. Lastly, respondents Ngulube (no. 20), Maphosa (no. 21), Nkiwane (no. 22), and Dungeni (no. 23) are familiar with each other, having trained as ZIPRA "guerrillas" in Zambia together and served in the new Zimbabwean army after independence. Intriguingly, they all retired very early and chose to pursue other vocations. Whilst these factors do not impact the study in any meaningful manner, some of their stories and therefore remembrances tend to corroborate or clone each other in evident ways. For instance, the three related participants from Gwanda must have heard each other's stories in the past and had – without being conscious of it – begun to form a collective and synchronised story made up of each and everyone's interwoven experience. Simply put, their stories sounded similar in logic and, more importantly, in the examples used.

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<sup>141</sup> These interviews are protracted in some instances because liberationists wanted to dwell on the injustices many of them faced as ZANU and ZAPU guerrillas in Tanzania turned on each other, killing each other in the process. They therefore believe that Gukurahundi was a continuum where they were being sort out by ZANU – as targets, as opposed to being honoured for their sacrifice as struggle heroes.

<sup>142</sup> Whilst 30 interviews were conducted, the ideas or data from two out of these 30 has not been used for reasons discussed in Chapter 2 – mainly around anonymity.

In support of this point, I draw attention to MaNcube (no. 9) and her husband, Hlabangana (no. 19). They grew up in the same community and experienced Gukurahundi in some similar ways, but at the same time also in some radically different ways. They were interviewed separately on different days. However, it became interesting how MaNcube particularly defaulted to her husband's memory, especially to fill in memory gaps that she had. She made statements such as:

I was there on the day that people were hit at the grocery stores ... but I do not necessarily remember what happened to a certain elder from my village who was badly beaten during this occurrence.<sup>143</sup>

She continued on to say:

my husband who was also there at the time tells me that ...such and such happened to that elder ... i.e. that he was carried by the soldiers in the wheelbarrow and was shot soon after they left, as gunshots were heard.<sup>144</sup>

By virtue of being husband and wife, they have had opportunity to share stories and experiences over the last decades. Their narration tends to reflect the collective experience over their individual one.

The issue of intertwined stories and reflection is not confined to the participants whom I have highlighted here as being married, as being relatives, or as having at least been in similar geographies during specific occurrences (such as the ZIPRA guerrillas of the liberation war). Rasta's (no. 5) story of Gukurahundi colludes with other narrations. This is a result of his exposure to Gukurahundi stories online. Many of these have morphed into becoming a part of his telling. Rasta notes that as a means to understand or come to grips with his violation, he has watched the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) programme Panorama's Gukurahundi documentary on YouTube several times. Rasta loves this documentary so much so that he gifted me with a "burned" computer copy during his interview, and despite my apprehension to take it, insisted that I take both discs one and two, as they would tell me everything I needed to know about Gukurahundi. He noted that the documentary would tell the story better than he could. After watching this documentary myself, I noted that his own story, to an extent, is comprised of ideas which are remarkably an alignment with the BBC documentary.<sup>145</sup>

This colluding of memory is not unique to Gukurahundi stories and can be found in other contexts. For instance, Garuba, in his research on Robben Island, South Africa, highlights the idea of

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<sup>143</sup> MaNcube, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>144</sup> MaNcube, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>145</sup> Panorama BBC Gukurahundi Part 1, <https://youtu.be/f6Zie7OoRDY> ; Panorama BBC Gukurahundi Part 2 <https://youtu.be/CJPIy-DgG04>

memories morphing into each other, where the individual memory is absorbed by the collective – especially the more it is shared.<sup>146</sup> Garuba believes that individuals are unable to live outside of the powerful narrative of Robben Island, which is over-contextualised and has prior texts as well as discourses.<sup>147</sup> In similar vein, Hatzfeld, in his research on Rwanda, shows that stories can indeed become conjoined, and sometimes even deliberately colluded.<sup>148</sup> He notes that despite going to great lengths to avoid colluding in his research through several means, he found that “certain episodes are told over and over, so they expand with all the contributions from different people”.<sup>149</sup>

It must be noted that the interview locations in table 3.1 do not necessarily indicate where the interviewee originally comes from, nor the geographical location of where the participant was during the time that Gukurahundi happened. They simply indicate where the interview itself was held. Table 3.2 below shows the spatialities from which Gukurahundi experiences, as shared by participants, are located. Whilst there is a larger sample size from Matabeleland South province, a significant number of Matabeleland North narrations are also existent in this dissertation. Seemingly, the Midlands part of the story remained inaccessible to me, even as I would have liked to have a cohort of respondents representing this geography.

The CCJP and LRF report of 1997 states that the Gukurahundi army was first deployed in Matabeleland North on 26 January 1983 and later deployed to Matabeleland South on 4 February 1984.<sup>150</sup> The violations committed in these two provinces differ slightly, whilst having been equally traumatic. The higher death tolls are found in Matabeleland North, representing a time when the army was not so bothered about being covert in its activities.<sup>151</sup> Matabeleland South, along with its share of fatalities, torture, disappearances, and displacement, had a larger concentration of food embargoes, as well as mine-shafting of the dead as a strategy to hide remnants of Gukurahundi, which had not necessarily been the case in the North.<sup>152</sup> This was

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<sup>146</sup> Harry Garuba, “A Second Life: Museums, Mimesis, and the Narratives of the Tour Guides of Robben Island,” in *Desire Lines: Space, Memory and Identity in the Post-Apartheid City*, ed. Noëleen Murray, Nick Shepherd, and Martin Hall (Routledge, 2007), 132.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> Jean Hatzfeld, *A Time for Machetes: The Rwandan Genocide - the Killers Speak* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2005b), 143.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe and Legal Resources Foundation, *Breaking the Silence, Building True Peace: A Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands, 1980 to 1988*. (London: Hurst & Company, 1997), xv.

<sup>151</sup> Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe and Legal Resources Foundation, *Breaking the Silence*, detail the army's role in Matabeleland North on pages 47–56; and the army's role in Matabeleland South on pages 57–65.

<sup>152</sup> Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe and Legal Resources Foundation, *Breaking the Silence*, detail the army's role in Matabeleland North on pages 47–56; and the army's role in Matabeleland South on pages 57–65.

possibly as a response to increasing advocacy from the Zimbabwe Catholics Bishops Conference and others against Gukurahundi on-goings.<sup>153</sup> One of Gukurahundi's most prominent sites of memory – Bhalagwe/Antelope Mine – is in Matabeleland South. A discussion on spatial/geographical memories of Gukurahundi forms part of chap. 6. Here, table 3.2, along with maps 3.1 and 3.2 – all below – give the reader a visual of what the landscape looks like, and which specific areas are being referred to.

**Table 3. 2: Spaces From Which Gukurahundi Experiences and Happenings Emanate**

PARTICIPANT	SPACE
1. Katherine	Bulawayo province
2. Thobela Moyo	Umzingwane district, Matabeleland South province
3. Gogo MaMoyo	Lupane district, Matabeleland North province
4. Sis' Siphos	Lupane district, Matabeleland North province
5. Rasta	Bulilimangwe district, Matabeleland South province
6. Brian Nyathi	Matobo district, Matabeleland South province
7. Toto Nkosi	Kezi, Matobo district, Matabeleland South province
8. Jabulani Mpande	Nkayi district, Matabeleland North province
9. MaNcube	Kezi, Matobo district, Matabeleland South province
10. Jonah Dube	Gwanda district, Matabeleland South province
11. Gogo Thandeka	Gwanda district, Matabeleland South province
12. Tshabalala	Lupane and Hwange districts, Matabeleland North province
13. Themba Nkomo	Plumtree, Bulilimangwe district, Matabeleland South province
14. Zwelibanzi Malinga	Bulawayo province
15. Mama Keletso	Beitbridge district, Matabeleland South province
16. MaMpofu	Umzingwane district, Matabeleland South province
17. Mthombeni	Gwanda (North) district, Matabeleland South province
18. Mama ka Zonda	Gwanda (South) district, Matabeleland South province
19. Hlabangana	Gwanda district, Matabeleland South province
20. Ngulube	Nkayi district, Matabeleland North Province
21. Maphosa	Plumtree, Bulilimangwe district, Matabeleland South province
22. Nkiwane	Tsholotsho district, Matabeleland North province
23. Dungeni	Tsholotsho district, Matabeleland North province
24. Nobuhle Sithole	Bulawayo province
25. Silas Dube	Plumtree, Bulilimangwe district, Matabeleland South province

<sup>153</sup> Michael Auret, *From Liberator to Dictator: An Insider's Account of Robert Mugabe's Descent into Tyranny* (Claremont: Philip, 2009).

26. Mthimkhulu	Umzingwane district, Matabeleland South province
27. Dube Senior	Gwanda district, Matabeleland South province
28. Sis Langa	Bulawayo province

**Map 3. 1: Zimbabwe – Provincial Map**

*Note:* Two cities – Harare and Bulawayo – currently occupy provincial status. This was not the case at independence.



*Source:* (Internet) zimstat.co.zw

The two Zimbabwean maps (see maps 3.1 and 3.2) simply give a spatial idea of the layout of the country at the provincial and district levels. In that regard, in the narratives, when a participant refers to Lupane or Gwanda, for example, this will give the reader an idea of where these places are. Additionally, Gukurahundi is a story of spatial memory, and these maps will give a better sense of where the experiences of the atrocity shared by participants are from (see table 3.2). These spaces have conceptual importance to my analysis of memories later in the thesis.

**Map 3. 2 : Major Cities, Provinces, and Districts of Zimbabwe**

Source: (Internet) zimstat.co.zw



For ease of access or reference, Maps 3.1 and 3.2 are also placed at the front of the thesis.

The next section provides synopses or summaries of select interviews as shared by participants. I have selected seven samples (about a quarter) from the 30 interviews conducted. I tried to use interviews which I thought were informative in the sense that they brought out a variety of different ideas, as opposed to those which shared stories that were more closely aligned in the way they happened or were experienced. For instance, if two people had shared stories about being held up in Bhalagwe, I would have only used one in the synopses, so that I left room for other tellings and experiences. These seven interviews were also amongst some of the most memorable for me, especially as certain experiences tugged at my emotional strings quite significantly, and/or were discussions which proved to be quite eye-opening or intriguing for me in terms of the knowledge shared.



Yuri, who writes about spaces of conflict and therefore about the reporting of certain stories as told by participants, observers, and researchers, emphasises biases in this selection process, especially with regards to whose stories are highlighted vs. those whose are not.<sup>154</sup> As I was selecting the synopses, I constantly asked myself: “what is it about the other stories which resulted in you not drawing attention to them?” Were it not for the word count limits of the PhD thesis, I probably would have shared a larger pool of vignettes over and above the ones which I have.

These vignettes are simply a telling of individual stories at this point, and many of the themes and ideas highlighted in them will be discussed and analysed in later chapters.

Considering this study relies on oral history methodology, focused on the sharing of memory, these stories are of significance to the dissertation as they showcase the outputs of the oral audio-taped interview processes, once it has been converted to the written format. As discussed in Chap. 2 (pages 29 – 30), there are often debates amongst historians about which source of knowledge carries more weight between the audio-taped telling, in comparison to the written transcribed version from which much academic analysis emanates.

### **3.3 Select Interview Synopses**

#### **3.3.1 Thobela Moyo**

Male

Aged 30–35

Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa (May 2014)

Self-employed as a producer (creative arts)

Thobela was born in Umzingwane district (rural Matabeleland South) in 1981, where he lived for the first 19 years of his life. He has no recollection of Gukurahundi, as he was a child (a year old) at the time that Gukurahundi commenced in 1982 – even as his parents and other siblings experienced it. He shares about his idyllic life history of growing up in this place, and within a community where his father held several leadership positions – as a headmaster at the local primary school, a lay pastor, and as an aspiring politician. His father followed politics keenly and

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<sup>154</sup> M.A Baum and Y.M Zhukhov, “Filtering Revolution : Reporting Bias in International Newspaper Coverage of the Libyan Civil War,” *Journal of Peace Research* 52, no. 3 (2015).

had a short career as a counsellor, which ended up with him getting violently attacked by opposition supporters, and resulted in the father walking away from politics immediately. As a result, Thobela does not follow politics, has an apparent disassociation with the political affairs of Zimbabwe currently, and feels that it is not a worthwhile pursuit in that it leads nowhere. Thobela Moyo's geographical distance, where he has lived in Cape Town for the last 15 years, has impacted on these views as well.

Thobela initially came to pursue his tertiary education in Cape Town in 2001. However, upon graduation, he never returned home. Thobela lives and identifies for every intent and purpose as a South African national. He feels that it is in this country that he has been allowed to thrive, and is a context that he can best relate to as it has provided him occasion and opportunity to follow his creative passions which were frowned upon in conservative Zimbabwe.

He shares deeply about his awareness of the injustices of Gukurahundi, as the stories have been passed down to him, but states that there is no real outlet through which Zimbabweans will ever get justice. Thobela believes that it is a wound whose resurgence is unnecessary and could have an impact on the existence of peace in the country, as we know it. As such, he feels that a focus should be on Zimbabwe's economic growth, and that the past should be left alone. Further, he highlights that he believes the majority of the second generation are themselves not even residing in the country, but are living in the diaspora instead, and therefore that Gukurahundi rhetoric should no longer affect or impact them from their distance.

■■■

### 3.3.2 Sis' Siphos

Female

Aged 40-45

Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe (December 2014)

Employed at a non-governmental organisation (NGO)

Sipho shares her experience of the Gukurahundi army at the age of six whilst residing in Lupane district (rural Matabeleland North). Forced village and community *pungwe* meetings resulted in her father being beaten to death in April 1983, as well as family elders and relatives being burnt together in one hut, in sight of the children from that village. Sipho describes her survival journey, along with other orphaned children (including her three-month-old baby brother) - where they lived in the wild and sometimes amongst animals, unattended to, as they escaped from the deaths and trauma that they had left behind.

Thembanani, (Sipho's baby brother) later died during the wandering three months as no one was able to tend to him accordingly, and where the greatest lack was around feeding him satisfactorily. He was buried in a shallow grave in the wild, which Sipho can unfortunately no longer trace, despite attempts to do so in her later days. She is frustrated by her inability to bury him properly today.

After hearing about the torching of the family elders, a relative from Bulawayo came and attempted to house Sipho and her siblings, as well as her cousins who had experienced the same fate (about 12 children in total). But life in the small township home in Bulawayo became an impossible existence. Resources were unavailable, and space was an issue. Eventually, these children were returned to the rural area and split amongst what remaining family members could be found – even though some were distant relatives. Unfortunately, many of these children thus had to return to the site of their trauma where their parents and relatives had been killed – because they had no choice. It also meant they often grew up experiencing hardship and neglect because they were considered as add-ons to family settings which already had deprivation themselves. Sis' Sipho says they were in some instances used as modern-day slaves.

Schooling was an issue. Sipho highlights that many teachers died as a result of Gukurahundi and the schools remained closed for a while. When they did eventually reopen, schooling opportunities for many of these victims were curtailed, because money for school fees was not available. Thus Sipho's schooling ended abruptly at the end of primary school (grade seven). The interviewee resents the most that she was denied the opportunity of school.

Eight years later, however, at the age of 21, she was able to return to form one in high school as a full-time student. However, at this time, she already had a husband and was a mother and was thus an adult learner. Despite going through hoops and hurdles to attain the relevant qualifications, opportunities to get into the much-coveted profession of nursing never materialised, in what she believes was a result of "tribal" nursing recruiting practices. She always wanted to give back by going to work in the clinic in her rural community. Eventually, she found herself working in the NGO (development) sector, and in a space where she could speak to human rights issues and work with people and communities like her, whose lives were ravaged by Gukurahundi.

Over and above having been denied schooling opportunities and having to work as a domestic help at the age of 14, Sipho battled with the issue of attaining a birth certificate and an identity

(ID) document in the absence of her deceased parents. Without a birth certificate and an ID in Zimbabwe, one is non-existent as a citizen and one's access to resources is curtailed.

The participant states that much of her healing from her trauma – though a continual process till date – has to do with many factors. One of which is her faith in Christ. Additionally, her work, where she offers counselling and other psycho-social related support to victims of Gukurahundi (and other trauma related matters), makes her feel that she can make a difference to people who have been violated as she has.

Lastly, Sipho spoke vaguely, and with a little trepidation, about a non-government sanctioned exhumation process (and thus a very controversial occurrence), whereby she was able to see her family members identified (through DNA), buried in a mass grave and laid to rest a good 30 years later. She highlighted that this brought her closure, and a sense of dignity about the bones which had been lying aimlessly around in the village, unburied.

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### **3.3.3 Jonah Dube**

Male

Aged 45–50

Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe (April 2016)

Subsistence farmer

Note that the italicised paragraph immediately below contains information which was *not* offered by Jonah Dube directly, but rather obtained through substantiating knowledge from other interviews conducted in the community, who not only alluded to what is described, but positively named him. On my end, I was ethical about the way I conducted these one-on-one interviews and did not ask participants to mention each other by name; neither did I expect them to corroborate other people's stories. I also did not tell participants who I was interviewing. I opted to write out this excerpt as I found it intriguing that three people mentioned it.

*Jonah, as a young teenager in the community during Gukurahundi, was an errand boy to the soldiers, and often times had to live with them and provide information to them. It is believed that Jonah was never asked nor forced by the soldiers to kill anyone. He was, however, tasked on occasion to bury some of the community members who were killed by the Fifth Brigade. Whilst not willingly forthcoming with information, it is believed Jonah remains witness to, and holds vital knowledge about the demise of certain people in the community, and possibly where they lie today. The*

*participants who mentioned Jonah's story do not seem to hold animosity towards him, but rather express an understanding and a sympathy about the position that he was forcefully put in – and had to survive through. Two of these participants are incidentally Jonah's relatives, one of whom Jonah wounded when he obeyed a command by the Fifth Brigade soldiers to beat the relative up.*

Whilst Jonah is very talkative and engaged in his interview, he will speak to anything and everything – but Gukurahundi itself. Below are the contents Jonah preferred to dwell on throughout our conversation:

Jonah was the first son born in a polygamous setting. Jonah's mother (who was treated badly by the in-laws) eventually left the homestead, convinced through a series of incidents that she was the recipient of witchcraft meted out to her possibly by the "other" younger wife. She left the children behind. Jonah asserts that as her children, they had an unbearable background full of negligence, lacking love, and with much partisanship shown towards the children of the other woman. This experience embittered Jonah. In addition to growing up witnessing strife in the home, Jonah's life as a child also encapsulates the period of the violence of the liberation struggle; Gukurahundi experienced throughout his teenage years; along with a whole host of political and socio-economic injustices in different seasons in his life thereafter.

Jonah highlights that he grew up very violent, with anger issues and was deemed a "problem child" in the community and at school. He also states that he was consumed with ideas of exacting revenge. A lack of resources to study further meant a relocation from his rural home to the city of Bulawayo, where he pursued a series of work opportunities as well as self-employment as a public transport driver. In this employment, he asserts that he spent time amongst "bad company" or thugs. A "rape accusation" was made at him by a customer, whom he had often given a lift to her home at night, and which landed him in trouble with the law. Dube spent time (three years) in maximum prison without trial, in the company of hardened criminals, but was eventually acquitted of the crime for a lack of evidence. Jonah believes that it is in the contemplation – offered by a maximum prison space – that his issues of anger and of being a conflicted person subsided. He asserts that he became a clean, sober, peaceful person, who is anti-violence. And who learnt to be fearful of authority (he claims he was not so before). Soon after he was acquitted, he moved back from the city to his rural home to live with his family. He asserts that the slow pace of the village grounds him, as opposed to Bulawayo. He works the land today.

The only near-political story that Jonah shares – awkwardly and disjointedly in the middle of the interview – is about something that happened to him more recently in the past few years, in his

rural home. He asserts that three strangers from ZANU arrived at his home and summarily offered him a job as driver, knowing full well that he supports the opposition and that he has not been employed in decades. He agreed to the job, but suspecting something was afoot, refused to return directly or immediately with these three men to the ZANU offices, as they requested. He stated that he had some things which he had to put in order in his home and promised them that he would go to the offices the following day. The next day, instead of going to the ZANU offices as agreed, he woke up very early in the morning and disappeared off to Bulawayo, as a place of refuge, for a few days. During that time, Jonah's house was burnt down. The carcass of the home remains as is, and we held our interviews in sight of this burnt building. His wife and children remained unharmed, but were in the homestead at the time it was burnt.

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### **3.3.4 Mthombeni**

Male

Aged 60–65

Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe (April 2016)

Subsistence farmer

Mthombeni lives with his wife, children, grandchildren, and other family members. He engages in subsistence farming and livestock-keeping – as most people in his community do – although he is not physically able to fulfil this work on his own, due to severe stab wounds to the head, along with perpetual health complications, sustained at the hand of the Fifth Brigade.

Much of Mthombeni's formative years include primary schooling and working in Bulawayo. By the age of 19 or 20 – and just before independence – Mthombeni was recruited by the giant native migrant labour association, Wenela, (in 1976), for placement in South African gold mines, where he worked for several years and accumulated some possessions.<sup>155</sup> This was a common occurrence at that time. Thus, opportunities to go to Zambia and be a ZIPRA guerrilla were missed by Mthombeni, as he chose to work as opposed to getting recruited into the movement. However, like most other young men his age, he supported the movement and respected the sacrifice being made in the struggle by guerrillas.

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<sup>155</sup> Wenela as it is commonly called, refers to the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA) which was set up as a recruiting agency for migrant labour in South Africa's gold mines. They recruited from Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

In 1982, under a new dispensation (i.e. President Robert Mugabe), Mthombeni returned to Zimbabwe to settle down and start a family. He had just completed the process of paying bride price and had gone to collect his pregnant bride from her family to his home, when the Fifth Brigade happened upon him along the way. Without any form of explanation, they called him, and immediately began to beat him up. Repeatedly. Excessively. So much so that Mthombeni became convinced of his imminent death by the age of 26/27 at the time. Much of Mthombeni's account details cruelty, continuous harassment, as well as other torture over a period of three months, with most of this time spent at the infamous Bhalagwe camp, where the bones of many men (young and old) remain hidden or thrown inside mine shafts – and lie unaccounted for. Incidentally, Mthombeni's very own father was held in Bhalagwe round about the same time as he was, but the influx of numbers meant he did not see him.

Notably, Mthombeni remembers starvation, with barely enough food and water to sustain "detainees", and the lack of any proper hygiene. Physical beatings were prominent, for which the butts of guns; knobkerries; firewood logs; *sjamboks*; and even bayonets were used. Mthombeni's body is thus a site of memory. Over and above this, psychological abuse, mainly of a verbal nature, was hurled at them by senior army personnel, where they were threatened about their eventual demise. Detainees often were forced to sing songs as well as complete many other feats at the whim of the soldiers, who Mthombeni feels were often very zealous and enjoyed this job rather too well.

Mthombeni asserts that they were initially accused of harbouring dissidents, but eventually were told that they were dissidents themselves and that they would suffer as a result of that. Despite paperwork being presented, which confirmed Mthombeni was an employee of Wenela and had, in fact, not been a part of the ZIPRA liberation army, he was held and repeatedly told that he was considered a dissident for all intents and purposes.

Detainees' families back home were being harassed too, as a means to punish them further. It is during these times that his pregnant wife, MaMpofu, was sexually violated in their bedroom by soldiers. Furthermore, excessive beatings led to her son being born with a disability. Both Mthombeni and the wife found the process of begetting a child difficult thereafter. They had to stop when the doctor eventually told them that it was a dangerous feat to keep on trying.

He details a life of difficulty on return from the camp. Especially as community members had multiple questions for him, to which he had no answers. These questions were about himself, about Bhalagwe, about his eventual release, and, more importantly, requests for information

about the whereabouts of other community members who had been taken at the same time as himself to Bhalagwe. He was never able to speak to these situations or answer questions about what happened to other people from the community. This has fostered mistrust amongst the community, with people questioning how he survived, at the expense of their children who did not.

The biggest issue that Mthombeni has had to live with after Bhalagwe are the frequent nightmares associated with the place, which feel very real, and in this way he re-lives the pain. He has not shared his story publicly, amongst other reasons, for fear of his life, and agreed to the interview, albeit with much trepidation.<sup>156</sup>

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### **3.3.5 Gogo MaMoyo**

Female

Aged 60–65

Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe (December 2014)

Self-employed (vendor)

Gogo MaMoyo was married and acculturated into a Ndebele family from xxx, in Lupane (rural Matabeleland North), although she refers to herself as Shona originally from xxx in Mashonaland. Her story involves being pulled out of the fields where she was ploughing, being taken to her home, and receiving two gunshot wounds, with the bullets both entering and cleanly leaving her body roundabout the Christmas of 1983. Some of her children, family, and neighbours were there to witness the occurrence. About seven months of treatment in hospitals – St Luke’s and Mpilo – meant she survived a tragedy, but has a physical disability which keeps her wheelchair-bound as a result.

Her homestead in Lupane was, however, burnt down. And she could not return to live there, but rather resides in a small township home in Bulawayo.

Gogo MaMoyo has the scars to show for this ordeal and lives with several disabilities and chronic pain – this includes the inability to use her right hand. She has a memory lapse around this period and is not 100 percent sure of the details behind the occurrence. However, she is convinced that

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<sup>156</sup> Most of the interview was shared by a tearful Mthombeni, who requested that his wife not be present - as he did not want her to see him crying, or to hear the gory details about what had actually happened during his time away. She has pleaded with him to tell her over the years, but he refuses. So she tried to sit in (by force) during the interview, so that she could hear it. I eventually had to ask her to leave.



this happened at the hand of the Gukurahundi army, incited by a family member; and particularly to her, because of her open support for ZAPU (along with other in-house politics in the polygamous family into which she was married).

Several attempts to be financially compensated for Gukurahundi have resulted in nothing tangible. She has travelled back and forth to Harare in this feat. She also does not receive a disability grant nor any form of support from social services and other government departments.

Incidentally, Gogo MaMoyo reiterates that in the past, she used to receive many strange visits from some who “asked her a lot of questions”, and others “who threatened her” about Gukurahundi, but nothing came of either. Of the threats, she highlighted that she became less and less fearful with each encounter, as well as over the years. Thus, MaMoyo resumes life in the Bulawayo townships, selling tomatoes and other sundries under a tree near a shop where she lives. She is barely able to survive off this trade, and has not paid rental, electricity bills, etc. in a long time (she has a pile of bills to show for it).

She believes no one will ever be able to hold President Robert Mugabe accountable for his actions except for God, and that it is not worthwhile seeking any justice from him or his dispensation any longer.

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### **3.3.6 MaNcube**

Female

Aged 45–50

Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe (April 2016)

Subsistence farmer

MaNcube relates her early years growing up in Matabeleland South (Kezi) and completing her primary and secondary schooling there. Coming from a relatively large family (12 siblings and two parents), MaNcube was the sixth child. Most of their livelihood initially included her father working in Bulawayo, but later returning to the rural areas as a subsistence farmer, along with doing carpentry as a means to augment the family finances.

MaNcube remembers the liberation struggle, which happened when she was still in primary school – where she remembers *obhudi* (“our brothers” – ZPRA guerrillas as they called them then) occasionally coming and being fed by the community. The guerrillas in the liberation struggle

fighting against Ian Smith were hailed as heroes in the community, as they fought for liberation and against injustice. One of the predominant issues MaNcube mentions that they fought against included the removal from productive land and the relocation of many black folk to deserted and unproductive lands by “white supremacists” – and thus the dissatisfaction that many black people had with their rulership. The guerrillas eventually took up arms against them. MaNcube says much of this bush war did not affect civilians, as it was fought sometimes in Zambia and Tanzania, and usually away from communities. However, that does not mean that many young guerrillas did not lose their lives on the battlefield, as they were indeed casualties of that war.

The struggle MaNcube remembers with better clarity is Gukurahundi, which happened in her area around the years of 1983–84. She was 13/14 during that time. She highlights that this time, there was fighting in their midst – unlike in the past, when guerrillas would have lived amongst them harmlessly or as passers-by (sojourners) on their way. Through Gukurahundi, dissidents and soldiers fought in their midst and tortured or killed civilians in unprecedented ways, which were incomparable to the liberation struggle. They were cruel.

MaNcube details experiences of torture that happened to people from her community, which she insists were at the hand of the Fifth Brigade, and not necessarily the dissidents. In times of hunger, soldiers often lured people out of their houses and to the local shopping centre, under the guise that *mealie* meal was on sale (when in fact it was not). When people got there, they would be hit and sometimes killed, often being asked to account for where the dissidents were, with community members often insisting that they did not know their whereabouts. The torture included dancing, chanting ZANU PF slogans, and, in the case of young girls and women, rape. MaNcube has two sisters who were raped. One of these sisters not only fell pregnant, but contracted sexually-transmitted diseases (STDs) from the whole ordeal and died at a young age as a result of it. Her sister’s child also did not live to the age of five, and her few years were always riddled with sickness. In retrospect, the family think it was HIV/AIDS.

Whilst MaNcube does not know the reasons for Gukurahundi, till date, she is convinced that whoever did it was anti-amaNdebele. She believes soldiers killed people simply because they were Ndebele, and not for any other reason. And that it was a means to reduce the population numbers of these people.

MaNcube highlights that Gukurahundi is not something that you forget or easily live past. And that as long as ZANU is in power, many things will continue to happen which remind them of their ordeal. This includes election periods. The presence of soldiers etc. These will always bring fears,

and never allow them to be free. She recounts elections, such as in 2008 and in 2012, when she fled her home and slept in the mountains, because ZANU supporters were on the lookout for people whom they did not think were partisan to them. They did door-to-door, house-to-house visits by night on manhunts.

She has not received any real help or support for her ordeal and has carried much of it in silence.

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### **3.3.7 Toto Nkosi**

Male

Aged 50–55

Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa (June 2015)

Academic and entrepreneur

Toto's family is politically astute, with a father and an elder brother who were both very involved in ZAPU and held rank. His father was arrested under Ian Smith's regime several times. Therefore, Toto not only grew up in the 1960s with a political awareness, but also experienced being a child of a political detainee over continuous stretches of time. He vows he will never be political as a result of this.

Born in a polygamous setting with two official wives, Toto is the seventh out of eight children from his direct mother. His mother was a nurse by day and a tailor by night. A rural life of farming and livestock-keeping were the order of the day; along with schooling at the mission boarding school near him, which he attended from a very early age. Toto asserts that one cannot write about Gukurahundi without mentioning the role of the Church. He states that the Church is an integral part of Gukurahundi spatiality and memory as the occurrence happened amongst religious institutions such as the Salvation Army, Brethren in Christ Church, as well as Roman Catholic mission schools and hospitals.

At some point, Toto's idyllic school life in the rural areas was disrupted. This happened both during the liberation struggle (pre-independence) and during Gukurahundi (after independence), which resulted in his mission school, amongst others, being shut down. He refers to white missionaries being targeted and killed possibly because they offered medical services to those injured in the violence. Toto Nkosi endorses the idea that the deaths of international white people tended to be recorded and given much acclaim, whereas unfortunately the deaths of

numerous more black people were usually not recounted in the same way, nor seemed to have the same effect. Toto relocated to Bulawayo in the early 1980s at age 19 to continue his schooling and for safety reasons. He left his elderly family members, including his mother, back in the rural areas. The elders were therefore the greatest recipients of violence according to him, as they often were harassed and tortured for their “dissident sons” who had fled from Gukurahundi and gone to Bulawayo and several other places such as Botswana and South Africa.

Having grown up near Antelope mine, he explains the abandoned and infamous site of Bhalagwe mine shaft and its significance as a place of death for many Gukurahundi victims. In sharing his geographical knowledge, he speaks about the Matabelelands and its people. And emphasises that the term Ndebele has erroneously been used to include “anyone who is not Shona”. And yet, the cultural grouping “Ndebele” houses other nations such as the Kalanga (which he self-identifies as); the BaSuthu; the Venda peoples; amaNambia, and other groups. He therefore feels strongly against these liberation struggle, ZAPU (ZIPRA), and Gukurahundi stories, which have highlighted “Ndebeleness”; and erased the presence, the contribution, as well as the suffering of other cultural groups also affected by these events. Additionally, Toto Nkosi highlights that whilst acculturated as Kalanga (which is his main identity), he simultaneously grew up learning and speaking in Ndebele as a language of survival and acceptance in the Matabelelands. He speaks against this Ndebele domination and subjugation of other nationhoods in the Matabelelands, as being equally problematic, in the same way that the Ndebele complain about Shona domination.

His personal encounter with the Fifth Brigade at the age of eighteen, during Gukurahundi, left him extremely fearful; as compared to his earlier encounter with ZIPRA liberation fighters (as a young boy), during which he said the guerrillas were civil to him and left him “excited to tell others about seeing these great heroes of the nation – *obhudi*.”<sup>157</sup>

He believes Gukurahundi, in its most gendered context, was an attack on young men, who were targeted, tortured, and, in some instances, died. Toto maintains that Gukurahundi violence felt different from what he had previously seen and experienced at liberation. It was a new form of violence to what the Matabeleland people were accustomed to at Smith’s hand and/or ZIPRA guerrillas. Through vigils, also referred to as revolutionary meetings called *pungwes*, slogans such as “Pamberi” and “Pasi” were chants that these people in ZAPU strongholds had to make.<sup>158</sup> These slogans were used so often that the locals began to call the Gukurahundi soldiers *oPasi*. Toto

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<sup>157</sup> Obhudi translates to mean ‘our brothers’. It appears this was a common and endearing term used by many towards those who fought the Rhodesian Bush War, also referred to as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Chimurenga.

<sup>158</sup> Pamberi - Forward with ZANU. Pasi - Down with ZAPU

believes the brutality of *oPasi* was unprecedented, and community members no longer felt protected by soldiers as civilians – whereas they had been in the guerrilla movement by *obhudi*.<sup>159</sup> They instead became the targets.

The participant strongly places Gukurahundi as a genocide and gives several reasons for his assertion. His greatest concern is not even the existence of Gukurahundi, as much as it is the denial of its existence by peers from other parts of the country. He strongly believes that a people who have been wounded never need to be put in a position where they fight for their story to be believed or given its credence.

Of the next generation – especially, in his case, children, nieces, and nephews who have grown outside of Zimbabwe – he notes an increasing interest in the political issues of Zimbabwe. He says that this interest tends to peak as this next generation comes of age (e.g., in the early 20s) and that “Zimbabweanness”, “Bulawayoness”, and “Ndebeleness” becomes an integral part of their identity, which may not necessarily have been the case in the past. Toto believes that it is at this stage that the youth take a particular interest in the story of Gukurahundi, and that he only shares his stories with them as long as the interest and questioning is initiated by the next generation themselves. He personalises these stories and tries to link them to lineage, so that they are more meaningful for the next generation in his family.

Toto believes in the documentation of Gukurahundi’s violence. He believes that with the upsurge of research on Gukurahundi, more of this story will be documented, so that it is not entirely lost or distorted, as it has currently not been included in history taught in schools. He also notes some music and songs that he remembers which he feels need to be re-recorded or sung in today’s mediums, which are a pivotal part and parcel of the liberation and Gukurahundi memory.

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Having now introduced the reader to the research participants and highlighted select vignettes, I focus now, in the next section, on reflections based on my fieldwork experience during this research journey.

### **3.4 Reflections on my fieldwork experiences, and my observations**

My initial assumption about the fieldwork was that it was going to be a much simpler and shorter process than it eventually turned out to be. I took for granted participants’ willingness to

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<sup>159</sup> Cadres (usually, but not entirely ZPRAs) who fought the liberation war were referred to as *obhudi* which translates to mean our brothers.

participate in such a study and further assumed that speaking about Gukurahundi was something survivors wanted to do. It was not. There were emotional realities and vestiges emanating from conducting interviews amongst persons who experienced the atrocities first hand, and who lived amongst these conflict-affected contexts. I often questioned the ethics around bringing up such emotionally laden remembrances, especially as I could not contain them. The interviews, i.e. oral history recordings, as well as their transcription eventually took up to two years in total and absorbed more of the research process than I expected.

My first learning is that there are evidently ways of entering into communities, as well as into interview spaces, which are negotiated. What struck me the most was the arduous process I initially had to follow to get buy-in from interview participants. Understandably, there was distrust or apprehension of me and my motives. Especially, there was the fear that I might be working for the Government of Zimbabwe in the capacity of a Central Intelligence Officer (CIO) and thus that I might be a sort of spy. Undeniably, it took me two years of trying to enter different spaces as well as to meet different people before I was eventually granted my first interview. The process for interviews conducted in South Africa was overall the easiest, possibly because of the freedom to speak, as informants are away from the context. I also found that some interviews in Bulawayo were also more accessible, to an extent. The rural spaces were the most challenging in this regard.

My first interviews were a result of recommendations made by contacts whom the participants felt they knew and trusted. One of the first places I went to was Ukuthula Trust's Bulawayo offices where I ran through some of my PhD ideas and thinking with the Director, Shari Eppel (December 2014). I also sought her advice about the organisations wide networks and asked her to make preliminary introductions. Ukuthula Trust has done a lot of work collating research and addressing the developmental and emotional needs within the Gukurahundi affected Matabelelands. Through processes such as this, and with other institutions, I began to make a lot of contacts/meet patrons who sometimes were survivors of Gukurahundi themselves and oftentimes travelled with me to interviews to make the initial introductions to respondents.<sup>160</sup>

I agreed to speak to you after I had spoken to xxx ... I wouldn't just give you that information. It's not an easy thing to do.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> I believe the presence of different people at different times (ie patrons), as good as the intention was, changed the power dynamics of any interview process – and where possible (not always), I tried to be alone with the respondent. Patrons seemingly were respectful enough to leave me to interview the men folk alone, but with the women folk sometimes took the liberty to sit in and add ad-hoc contributions to the discussions, much to my irritation.

<sup>161</sup> Gogo Thandeka, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

Incidentally, Field, in his work with Rwandan refugees in Cape Town, makes similar observations about “issues of trust” where access to interviewees is concerned. He notes that Rwandans rarely consent to being interviewed and are often wary of being spied upon. Field cites Mr C.K, who puts this distrust in apt terms when he asserts:

They say “you want to take my story, you go to the government, and the government come and pick me up... that's the problem”. They don't believe you are a professor doing research, no, no, they don't believe it. Its trust, we don't trust each other from our country.<sup>162</sup>

So, whilst the context of the violations of Gukurahundi and Rwanda differs, the idea that trauma, amongst other factors, can breed anxiety, distrust, and withdrawal abounds. Additionally, vulnerability and multiple fears over daily socio-economic survival – which become the perpetual realities of survivors – exacerbate this feeling. Intriguingly enough, in both cases, the wariness is around being reported to the government – this lies at the ultimate heart of the insecurity, leading one to question the role of governance structures in protecting civilians in such times.<sup>163</sup>

Throughout the interviews I learnt some of the reasons behind this mistrust.

First, many of the participants observed that as a research topic, Gukurahundi is still too difficult to talk about and thus it is something that most people are not willing to come forward to speak about at a whim. It is a painful occurrence.

Second, there are fears. Many of the survivors have been threatened and silenced by the government (or other people, including themselves), disbelieved, or even dismissed as sharing falsities whenever they told their stories in the past. Throughout the interviews, what stood out about most respondents was that where possible, participants tried to get people to corroborate or witness their accounts in solidarity, fearing that they might not be believed – this is sadly the legacy of a disputed Gukurahundi.<sup>164</sup> Additionally, there is an apprehension towards anyone who

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<sup>162</sup> Sean Field, *Oral History, Community and Displacement: Imagining Memories in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 136.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid*, 137.

<sup>164</sup> A personal observation emanates from MaMoyo's interview, where she spent much time holding her phone and trying desperately to get a hold of her son who was also there at the time when the occurrence happened. It appears she wanted a witness to the events as she told them, and also wanted him to tell his own story. (Based on the Sean Field reading about his father “Shooting at Shadows”, a common thread in the telling of memory by interviewees is the idea that they may not be believed. And sometimes this may cause them silence or anxiety around talking about the issue). MaMoyo was unfortunately not able to get a hold of him, and gave up with much frustration as the phone was not going through. He had in fact been in the house just a few minutes before we had arrived, so she was convinced he was still close by in the surrounding township.

tries to bring this topic back on the radar. People know the consequences of speaking out, based on their past experiences with the liberation struggle and Gukurahundi. In the past, it sometimes meant participants, along with their family members, became targets of violence (in all its political and socio-economic forms). These experiences are viewed as a continuum of largely negative events spanning across time, which breeds constant fears and anxieties.

Additionally, many of the participants feared for my own personal safety. They noted that there was a likelihood that my movements were being watched. The more this was said, the more I began to be fearful too, particularly every time I went for interviews to the rural areas. Seemingly, when entering and driving through a community or a village, residents seemed to know or were notified of our presence (mainly spotted by the entrance of the car) in the vicinity, and were advised that they should be careful. Fortunately, the car used was not the typical vehicle associated with those belonging to government officials, nor one of the red trucks which communities often associated as belonging to opposition MDC members.

On these trips, it was reiterated that there are a lot of government intelligence agencies in the area and that they too would have been scrutinising my movements. As a result, where I could avoid it, I never returned to the same area twice. I would conduct my interviews and leave, and usually had a patron milling around the car during the interview to ensure that everything was okay. Despite the lengthy driving (sometimes up to two hours one-way) to an area, I never slept in the villages, as I had been advised against it, but often had to leave the area that same day and drive back to Bulawayo on every excursion. As expected, a lot of money was spent on fuel for these trips and, at some point, that alone became a challenge, as the fieldwork was unfunded.

I do not know if the danger was real or only imagined, but I know that it certainly contributed towards me feeling tense and uncomfortable. I suspect that the discomfort was not simply due to the fact that my research was focused around Gukurahundi and therefore a continuum of it. To a certain extent, it was also a reflection of the national political context at the time. I conducted my interviews between December 2014 and July 2016. In this period, the Government of National Unity (2009–2013), in which Robert Mugabe of ZANU, Morgan Tsvangirai of MDC-T, and Arthur Mutambara of MDC-M shared power, had recently lapsed. ZANU had won the country in the 2013 harmonised elections with 61.09% of the presidential votes, while Tsvangirai had received 34.94% of the votes. This was a significant loss in voter confidence for Tsvangirai in comparison to the gains he had previously made in the 2008 elections. It was therefore a season of political promises and threats by both sides, as well as of leadership uncertainty about the future. There was distrust towards anyone seen as researching the political space in that particular time.



Third, a commonly asked question about the interview process was as to what participants would get out of granting me the interview.

What will they give me for this interview? [Gogo MaMoyo quickly answers herself literally within a second of asking the question ... as if resigned]. Nothing?<sup>165</sup>

Please tell me how all of these questions which you are asking me ... how are they going to help?<sup>166</sup>

Despite the fact that I took time to discuss my capacity as a researcher, before any interviews were conducted, there were a variety of expectations from participants. With time, many of the participants pointed out that students, government officials, NGOs, and a whole host of researchers in the past have come to them to seek information from them, for one reason or another. These groups usually made many promises, thus giving participants hope – all to nought – time and again about gaining resources, or addressing their issues. All these processes re-exposed survivors to their ordeals. Unfortunately, many of these communities have not seen the material benefits of granting these interviews.

But somehow, people would come and do their interviews and then go away, so I think I developed an attitude towards people who do interviews ... because they take. In the end, you know ... they get what they want, and then they go away. Then what about the survivor?<sup>167</sup>

So I had people coming to me asking for interviews. Some of them ... I would tell them off ... and say, no! I think I am tired of being used.<sup>168</sup>

My interviews – 33 years on from Gukurahundi – were conducted against this backdrop, with people feeling fatigued and continually having been disappointed by developmental promises, which were made but did not materialise; having had hopes of seeing their human rights violations addressed, but which were never realised. Many interviewees were struggling amidst Zimbabwe's high inflation economy and were unemployed, and therefore they hoped that this could help them substantially. It thus became important for me to emphasise from the beginning

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<sup>165</sup> P.S. I am not sure who Gogo MaMoyo was referring to as 'they'. However, it is clear that she wanted to know if the granting the interview would result in her gaining something out of it. Gogo MaMoyo, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>166</sup> MaNcube, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>167</sup> Sis' Siphos, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>168</sup> Sis' Siphos, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

that I was simply a student, and if anything, all I could promise them out of this research process was that their memories would be documented and honoured. All I could offer was the ability to tell their stories.

This does not mean that many participants still did not attempt to get access to other things from me after the interviews. Their requests related mostly to material needs. I was asked if I could help supply a football kit for a group of youth in a township, who were idle and needed some form of recreation. Several requests were also made for me to fund a variety of small-scale developmental projects including chickens, goats, rabbits, gardening, and other livelihood projects. Additionally, I was solicited for money – or at least access to donors – to help participants pay fees for children and/or grandchildren; to pay bills, i.e. for hospital, electricity, and water; to help them find work; as well as to support them in accessing psychological services, as a way of dealing with pain. Seemingly, many of these survivors of Gukurahundi, who still reside in the rural Matabelelands, face socio-economic difficulties that are generational, as a result of the violence. The social problems are exacerbated by the fact that the government can no longer provide adequate subsidised basic services for people, such as access to education, healthcare, water, and electricity.<sup>169</sup>

[P]eople have all these expectations that you have come to ask them questions ... “this means that they are going to help me”. One needs to understand that we were looking for help, because we need help. We have nothing.<sup>170</sup>

This reality became prominent throughout interviews and shall be elaborated upon in later chapters.

Whilst I could not pay participants for the interviews, I undertook to procure basic food baskets for respondents, especially those in Zimbabwe. I found that I did not have to do this for my interviewees in South Africa, for example, even though I tried to identify and address needs, such as transport costs, etc. I did not alert participants about these goods beforehand, and only ever revealed them at the end of the interview (on my way out). This was so that the food would not have in any way “bought the interviewees” nor changed and impacted the way that they told their stories. Simply put, I was not incentivising or “bribing” them to talk to me, but rather wanted to

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<sup>169</sup> DFID 2008, statistics showed that over a quarter of Zimbabwe’s 13 million populace has migrated as a result of these institutional failures and poverty. In fact, some sources say that as much as 5.2 million of Zimbabwe’s populace live outside the country - as economic and political migrants. Poor Zimbabweans tend to live illegally in Southern African countries which are close by, and key service providers like nurses, doctors, teachers and accountants are increasingly leaving behind weakened structures, such as understaffed academic institutions and hospitals.  
[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

<sup>170</sup> Jonah Dube, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

give a token of my appreciation and offer something that would practically meet their point of need thereafter.

In similar vein, some participants outdid themselves in trying to host me well – even when they sometimes had little themselves. For example, they would cook the traditional *isitshwala* (maize meal) and *umfushwa* (green dried vegetables), even though I insisted that I was fine and did not need anything. However, out of respect, I always ate whatever was provided for me and, on occasion, left for home with gifts such as *umumbu* (maize), *ijodo* (pumpkin), *imfe* (sugarcane), and, in interviewee Rasta's case, two dubbed DVDs of the Gukurahundi documentary by BBC's Panorama which he sourced from a Nigerian vendor as a gift for me.<sup>171</sup>

My biggest concern with the majority of women respondents was that they spent a great deal of time worried about hosting well; cooking for, and feeding, me; caring for my comfort, etc. I often thought interviews conducted in an office setting, as opposed to in the home, for example, would have created a space for them to be less concerned with hosting. A reading of Owen's work intriguingly reiterates similar experiences of the gendered spaces and roles or/expectations for both men and women, in her fieldwork.<sup>172</sup>

In terms of space, the interviews were mostly conducted in participants' homes, especially but not solely in the case of interviews conducted in the rural areas. My interview with Gogo Thandeka, for instance, took place out in the fields, while sitting on rocks.<sup>173</sup> The reason behind this was that Gogo Thandeka needed to look out for, and chase away, monkeys, which are notorious for eating or stealing her produce during the day. Naturally, this interview had its fair share of disruptions. Additionally, I also struggled to concentrate because I was preoccupied with looking for the monkeys – not altruistically because I was worried about her crops, but rather because I know that I am terrified of monkeys and was readying myself to run away if they approached us. I therefore spent a great deal of time pretending to be calm in a situation she had assumed I was comfortable in. This interview, along with a few others, was held during harvesting season (i.e. February/March and sometimes April), and so I found that some interviews were held in the field, with participants agreeing to the interviews as long as they did not detract from their farming and other daily routines.

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<sup>171</sup> Rasta, November 2015. Interviewed in Johannesburg, South Africa.

<sup>172</sup> Joy Owen, "Humanising the Congolese 'Other': Love, Research and Reflexivity in Muizenberg, South Africa," in *Postcolonial African Anthropologies*, ed. Rosabelle Boswell and Francis B Nyamnjoh, 2016.

<sup>173</sup> Gogo Thandeka, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

A few interviews in Bulawayo were set in office spaces. Additionally, in Bulawayo, I once tried to host an interview in my parents' home but decided never to do it again as I was uncomfortable the whole time, and worried that I had made my parents' home a target.

According to Ntsimane:

[I]nterviewers are often formally educated people, particularly those who are participating in a university sponsored project or working towards a university degree ... and thus interviewers tend to be seen by interviewees as being in a position of power.<sup>174</sup>

Thus, participants seldom recognise that their own knowledge is power. When they are not undermining their knowledge, they deflect from having to share it. Indeed, Rasta became convinced that the UK-recorded Panorama DVD, which he had once watched and which spoke about Gukurahundi, was the ultimate source of knowledge.<sup>175</sup> He was insistent that if he obtained a copy for me, we could skip his interview altogether. It is also interesting that he tended to share less of his personal experience of being beaten up by Gukurahundi soldiers as a primary school student, and more of some pieces of knowledge that he had picked up from this DVD. Overall, with some interview participants, I went through the difficult process of often having to convince the interviewees that their sources of knowledge as well as their lived experiences (as unofficial as they thought these were) were always going to be worth more than anything I or any outsider could ever tell them about their context. I stressed that I was mainly interested in their personal experiences.

The issue of signing the consent forms involved a lot of negotiation. I had not anticipated the fears associated with this process along with the participants' resistance to it. For most people, the idea of putting one's details on paper gave them the uneasy feeling of opening themselves up to being easily identified, should these consent forms land up in the "wrong hands". They felt that it had no anonymity and, worse, that it left them vulnerable. In further interrogating the idea of signing on paper with pen, I realise that the process itself comes with power inequalities, along with other representations between the person signing and for whom the paper is being signed. Strangely, I am reminded of the association people have with signatures and the colonial project – especially the story of how King Lobengula (son of King Mzilikazi, father of the Ndebele nation) signed away

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<sup>174</sup> Radikobo Ntsimane, "Why Should I Tell My Story? Culture and Gender in Oral History," in *Oral History in a Wounded Country: Interactive Interviewing in South Africa*, ed. Philippe Denis and Radikobo Ntsimane (Scottsville: Univ. of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2008), 109.

<sup>175</sup> Rasta, November 2015, Interviewed in Johannesburg, South Africa.

his kingdom, Matabeleland.<sup>176</sup> Through the Moffat Treaty of Friendship (February 1888) and the Rudd Concession (October 1888), Lobengula was eventually convinced, and cobbled together an “X” signature onto a scroll, thinking the business deal entailed limited mineral concessions to a group of Cecil Rhodes’ associates. The papers were, in fact, manipulated, and they were later discovered to be gold mining concessions to his entire kingdom.<sup>177</sup>

Regardless of the myriad conversations about, and resistance to, the consent forms, I had to insist on them. From an institutional point of view, the University of Cape Town and the Department of Historical Studies in particular have rigorous regulations, which would not allow me to conduct an interview without the necessary signatures.

Much like the participants, I too often felt burdened by these signed forms, as well as by the interview recordings on my Dictaphone, and I have often worried about the ramifications of this information getting lost or stolen. Additionally, the ethics of protection also determine what kind of information I can and cannot select (e.g., names of places, people, select memories, etc.) that lead to, or else compromise, anonymity. I remained “precious” about the recordings and did not allow other people to listen to them, etc. Additionally, I have always tried to store research material safely and as anonymously as one can – given the circumstances. I resonated with Jessee’s 2015 article about her fieldwork experiences in Rwanda and Bosnia, in which she writes of the dilemmas that she faced in protecting participants’ identities. She says: “as I began writing detailed accounts of individual informants, I was haunted by the sense that I was revealing too much”.<sup>178</sup> Jessee notes the importance of obscuring identities of informants through pseudonyms, but still constantly thought that it was not enough.<sup>179</sup> I struggled with participant Tshababala’s interview in this regard as it seemed to lead back closely to him, even as I tried to conceal several aspects of his telling. I eventually did not include huge parts of his interview in this study. Jessee’s conclusion to this conundrum is relatable. She notes that she eventually censored herself.<sup>180</sup> I did the same.

In these interviews, I learnt to pay much attention to non-verbal communication, as well as to reading the emotional vestiges that emerged during sessions. In the middle of interviews there were many tears; long and short pauses (or silences); as well as stuttering. On occasion a

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<sup>176</sup> David Hilton-Barber, *The Baronet and the Matabele King: The Intriguing Story of the Tati Concession* (Pinetown: 30° South Publishers, 2013).

<sup>177</sup> David Hilton-Barber, *The Baronet and the Matabele King: The Intriguing Story of the Tati Concession* (Pinetown: 30° South Publishers, 2013).

<sup>178</sup> Jessee, “The Limits of Oral History: Ethics and Methodology amid Highly Politicized Settings,” 682.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 683.

respondent would start to tell a story and taper off mid-sentence (in a memory bubble) and move on to the next item without having completed what they set out to say. Hatzfeld's interviews seem to have similar manifestations.<sup>181</sup> As he writes:

a dialogue was ~ often interrupted by tears, untranslatable silences, digressions – sometimes trivial and lighthearted – about daily life, or reflections on the war or agriculture; it might be punctuated by the arrival of visitors, the whims of a child, a Primus, a stroll, or a car ride.<sup>182</sup>

Hatzfeld adds:

[Interviewees] whispered, flared up, became harsh, or tender. The tone of their voices was never the same from one day to the next ... [and therefore the listener] had to listen with their heart.<sup>183</sup>

Of note were a lack of chronology and ultimately a conflation of stories in some instances. Portelli states that “narrators do not seem to concern themselves excessively about chronological accuracy”, choosing rather to tell the information in their stride.<sup>184</sup> Where interviewees in their narration lose sense of place and time, or lack dates and specificities, they substantiate the displacement and condensation theory as made popular by Portelli when discussing the case of Trastulli's death.<sup>185</sup> According to this theory, an event is spoken of as confused or else mixed with other similar incidents, but we also see participants condensing the elongated trauma and pain which happened over a protracted period of time – almost as if it was a once-off occurrence.

On the contrary, in some cases, people (both men and women) remembered and could narrate their memories through their life histories to the ‘Tee’, with alarming accuracy. Seemingly, this happened as a result of participants, who have spent years replaying these happenings and scenes in their minds, getting transfixed on those moments. This also occurred in particular when people spoke about their individual memories, and not necessarily the collective or public memory, as private memories had more resonance and meaning in comparison to the public narrative.

I found that the cohort of liberationist participants in the research study also had a particularly strong reminiscence of the Rhodesian Bush War in their telling. Baba Tshabalala attributed this skill to many years of military training, which included the ability to commit even the smallest

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<sup>181</sup> Jean Hatzfeld, *Into the quick of life: the Rwandan genocide : the survivors speak : a report* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2005a).

<sup>182</sup> Jean Hatzfeld, *Into the quick of life: the Rwandan genocide : the survivors speak : a report* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2005a), 142

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 143

<sup>184</sup> Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories*, 25.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

detail to memory.<sup>186</sup> Tshabalala highlighted that he believed in the idea of a trained military memory (i.e., amongst soldiers, guerrillas, etc.) – one very different from the untrained memory which a civilian is likely to speak from. There is also a possibility that certain memories speak of times when participants felt in control of their lives more than at others, hence the process of committing small details to memory.

My role in all this was not just to be a recorder of events (interviewer); I often had to be sensitive to the emotional needs at play. However in those spaces, I did not always feel adequately equipped to deal with some of the emotionally laden issues that were shared. Moreover, I was burdened by the reality that I had opened up interviewees to these sentiments and did not quite know how to contain them after the interviews. Additionally, I was often over-wrought by the intensity and sombreness of what participants told me or showed me. I too was internalising and also grappling with the contents of the interviews, noting that they were impacting me emotionally. Hatzfield puts this aptly when he states:

[W]e feel the need, sometimes suddenly, to escape the universe into which our interviewee has plunged us with his (or her) imperturbable voice.<sup>187</sup>

In similar vein Stephen Sloan highlights the emotional weight that researchers do not necessarily pay enough attention to – towards protect themselves, in the same way that they are often more mindful about containing interviewees as they share first-hand accounts of crisis, or violation, and even. He states that “interviewers need additional support when conducting crisis or disaster oral history projects”, as it takes a toll psychologically on them too.<sup>188</sup>

Furthermore, I asked myself several questions throughout the research process about my role as a researcher, questioning “ideas of objectivity, neutrality and subjectivity” and pondering over “what I was listening to, as well as hearing”; “what my identity and positioning is in relation to the people that I was interviewing”, etc.<sup>189</sup> Some of these concerns are adeptly articulated by Hirsch in the following statement:

How, in our present, do we regard and recall what Susan Sontag (2003) has so powerfully described as the “pain of others?” What do we owe the victims? How can we best carry their stories forward without appropriating them, without unduly

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<sup>186</sup> Baba Tshabalala, May 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>187</sup> Hatzfeld, *Into the quick of life*, 142.

<sup>188</sup> Cave and Sloane, *Listening on the Edge: Oral History in the Aftermath of Crisis*. Mark Cave and Stephen Sloane (eds.), (Oxford, UK : Oxford University Press), 2014, 268.

<sup>189</sup> Vis and Carton, “Doing Oral History”, 53. speak in great detail about the insider/outsider dynamic. Simply put, the fact that an interviewer is viewed as an insider (in my case), and sometimes as an outsider to the research process, comes with its own dynamics - and it brings about both positive and negative influences on the interview process.

calling attention to ourselves, and without, in turn, having our own stories displaced by them? How are we implicated in the crimes?<sup>190</sup>

I note my positionality throughout the research process. Owens, in her writing, highlights Okely's assertions that:

[I]n the study of a human being by another human being, the specificity and individuality of the observer are ever present, and therefore must be acknowledged and explored, and put to creative use.<sup>191</sup>

In my capacity as a researcher, I was perceived as both an insider and an outsider by participants in the study (as well as other stakeholders) throughout the journey. I found that I had some clout in the field by virtue of being black and acculturated as "Ndebele" in a space where the same language was spoken. Essentially, some participants saw these interviews as a process of conveying an oral story or communicating important history to one of their own. There was an expectation from participants that I would take these accounts seriously as they supposedly would have significant value to me. Admittedly, this story does indeed have great significance to me – and I have always been conscious of my subjectiveness throughout the experience. One of the positives of this is that I undertook to hear and immerse myself in Gukurahundi narratives in a personal manner, driven by the quest to know my parents and family anguish (over that period), as well as to understand their responses to the painful period. I grew up in a house where family, friends, and relatives spoke much of this occurrence - in hushed tones – and held onto much anger and resentment. I also grew up witnessing their distrust towards the government and therefore voter apathy.

I am an outsider to the story for several reasons too. My age at that time of the interviews (whilst not stated to participants) may, through rough estimation, have been perceived as being young. There was therefore the presumption that I was not old enough to have experienced Gukurahundi first hand and thus came from a place of naiveté. Whilst my conjectured age may not have been accurately guessed, I believe this assumption was made because of the fact that I remain unmarried. In many African communities, the progression from being viewed as a young girl/lady to a mature woman is usually measured based on one's marital status and association with being a mother of children. As I did not have any of this clout, I sometimes felt there was patronising treatment of me because of my perceived status. Owen says the following about her experience in the field:

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<sup>190</sup> Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," *Poetics Today* 29, no. 1 (March 1, 2008), 14.

<sup>191</sup> Owen, "Humanising the Congolese 'Other': Love, Research and Reflexivity in Muizenberg, South Africa," 47.



I understood and acknowledged the gendered dynamic of interactions occurring in the fieldsite [*sic*]. Constructed as a lone, and thus unprotected woman, rather than a researcher, I was vulnerable and open to proposals. I did not have the safety accorded by a ~ male body.<sup>192</sup>

I did not have to deal with the embarrassment of being romantically propositioned by interviewees because of my single status (even though I had emotionally prepared myself for this reality, as it has happened in the past). I did, however, find myself being seen by many of the interviewees as a woman in need of masculine protection. For instance, male family members and participants themselves could not fathom the idea of me driving the hour-and-a-half journey (one way) to the rural areas on my own – despite the fact that I am capable of driving myself – and insisted on driving me and escorting me to these places.

There are other aspects that also make me an outsider to this participant community, in particular that I lived in Bulawayo – an urban space – during Gukurahundi – something that was seen as a largely rural occurrence. So it was assumed that there were certain spaces which I could relate to geographically, which in fact I could not. Indeed, during interviews, mention was made of many a rural place, which I did not seem to know or had not visited in the past – much to the frustration of interviewees who sometimes tried to raise specific points/ideas linked to a specific landmark in say Lupane or Tsholotsho (or another rural space), for example, which I was not familiar with. In addition, the fact that I now reside in South Africa, and have done so for the last 17 years, also meant that there is a certain socio-economic and political reality which participants felt they had experienced throughout the tenure of Robert Mugabe and his dispensation, which those in the diaspora – would not have experienced. In this regard, my lived reality was perceived as being that of an outsider.

With regard to collating and analysing information, a larger number of the interviews were conducted in the local language, isiNdebele, which was the language most participants felt comfortable speaking in. Some interviews were mixed with isiNdebele and English, along with snippets of Shona phrases. This being a memory study, it became evident that Ndebele is the dominant language through which participants conceptualised, digested, and communicated their memory. In this regard, memory has language aspects to it. Memory also has intonation, based on the language.

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<sup>192</sup> Owen, “Humanising the Congolese ‘Other’: Love, Research and Reflexivity in Muizenberg, South Africa,” 47.

There was clearly a generational difference in the way that adults – through Ndebele and the use of specific words – communicated their memory and pain over other words. Their memories were deliberate and slow, and their words weighty. I am a proficient Ndebele speaker, but I confess that the stories told through traditional “sayings” and idioms, and those articulated in very good grammar and through “old” words were both intriguing and challenging for me in some instances. These words fell outside of my everyday language. Thus, an understanding of cultural knowledge and insight into the local context are imperative, as what is being spoken about, is not necessarily what is being said.

Additionally, it was interesting to see how words like genocide, depression, trauma, and gender did not exist in the local lexicon, and communicating these words in Ndebele usually was not done.<sup>193</sup> In this regard, a participant would make statements such as “*abantu babecabanga ukuthi ngasengigula engqondweni ngoba ngaba traumatized kakhulu*” (translated as, people thought that I was sick or crazy in my mind [i.e. I had a madness] because I had been very traumatised). Words like depression are not easily equated and end up being replaced by local words which mean other alternatives, such as craziness, madness, sick in the head, etc. Other words like trauma are not replaced at all. Participants simply use stretches of sentences in Ndebele and insert the word “trauma” in English – within the sentence – and revert back to the rest of the sentence in Ndebele.

In the case of the younger age cohorts in the research, their memory has a different language, and a different intonation and pace. Sometimes their chosen language of memory was English, the pace of their story faster. Their understanding of events was also differently articulated in that it tended to easily fit in with more modern discourses and statements such as “my constitutional right”; “human rights abuses”; “genocide”, etc. Incidentally, the younger participants were also very open to seeing or expressing memory through the creative arts (e.g., through the mediums of music and plays). The whole of chap. 7 is dedicated to the idea of intergenerational memory, so I refer the reader to that chapter for a more foundational reading or an introduction to the debates on the idea of intergenerational memory.

However, in recording the memories in the spaces and languages (English and isiNdebele, with snippets of Shona) that I had, I then faced the reality of being overwhelmed by the translation/transcription process. I initially had to translate all the interviews into English and thereafter transcribe them (which at the time felt like double the workload and arduous). From a

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<sup>193</sup> Margaret Craven put this aptly when she reiterates gleanings about living with the Wakashan of British Columbia - that, “but there is one thing you must understand. They will not thank you...There is no word for thank you in Kwak’wala”. Margaret Craven, *I Heard the Owl Call My Name* (London: Picador Pan Books, 1967), 12.

research perspective, the cost in terms of labour and time became excruciating. It also meant that practically, I could not procure much needed transcription services because of the specific use of a certain language, which was a barrier for many available transcribers. Of greater consequence is the fact that I felt that the translation (for academic purposes) – as necessary as it was, and as accurately done as it could have been – watered down the heart of the experience shared or changed the meaning of that which was articulated. There are some words, emotions, and experiences in Ndebele that English cannot capture adequately, and vice versa. In this regard, there are some cultural articulations in this report which are ultimately defiled. Buthelezi speaks of this as the idea of vocabularies that come out of the colonial lexicon, which are often “outdated, imprecise and inadequate” and result in ideas being lost in translation.<sup>194</sup> Buthelezi buttresses the idea that

other useful ways of knowing the past lie barely hidden in African languages to which scholarship has not paid serious attention, just as colonial assumptions remain masked in the seemingly self-evident English language vocabularies in use in daily speech. We must, therefore, develop scholarship in and on African languages.<sup>195</sup>

I conclude my reflection here by musing on these words by Buthelezi.

The next chapter (chap. 4) focuses on general narratives about Gukurahundi, as shared by participants. The discussion addresses the questions of what; when; where; who; why; and how with regard to Gukurahundi. I also highlight the impact that Gukurahundi actions had on survivors. In so doing, chap. 4 paves the way for the detailed memory discussions and analysis that follow in subsequent chapters.

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<sup>194</sup> Mbongiseni Buthelezi, *Tribing and untribing the Archive: identity and the material record in Southern KwaZulu-Natal in the late independent and colonial periods* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2016), 597.

<sup>195</sup> Mbongiseni Buthelezi, *Tribing and untribing the Archive: identity and the material record in Southern KwaZulu-Natal in the late independent and colonial periods* (Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2016), 598.

## CHAPTER 4. ABOUT GUKURAHUNDI: SURVIVOR NARRATIVES

### 4.1 Introduction

This is mostly a narrative chapter, which introduces initial ideas and views about Gukurahundi, as shared by the participants, with reference to relevant theories and literature. These descriptions offer foundational experiences and knowledge of Gukurahundi and are the connection to chaps. 5, 6, and 7 – the findings and analysis chapters, which interrogate various aspects of the memory discourse in greater detail.

### 4.2 Gukurahundi: The Word, Its Meaning, and Use

The first factor to consider when speaking about Gukurahundi is not only the meaning of the word Gukurahundi, but also its use and the overall “linguaging” associated with the term. For the purposes of this thesis, “linguaging” Gukurahundi refers to two aspects: first, it refers to how language is used to share Gukurahundi memories; and second, to the specific languages associated with Gukurahundi. The most commonly referred to, and reiterated, meaning – as in the introduction (chap. 1) – holds that Gukurahundi is a Shona word, which means “the early rain which washes away the chaff, before the spring rains”.<sup>196</sup>

There are critical questions one can ask about this word – Gukurahundi – including whether this word, representing a specific language (Shona), impacts the way it is understood or the way it was experienced, particularly by survivors who spoke a different language to Shona? Whilst I never heard the participants use a different local word to Gukurahundi, I tried to find out if, for example, there was a Ndebele or Kalanga equivalent to describe the occurrence. I learnt that the word Gukurahundi and the associated language of Shona has impacted the memory of the occurrence; and has led survivors, in most instances, to associate the atrocities with tribal differences and to identify the language of Shona as a language of domination and oppression. This came up a lot in the telling of the Gukurahundi story, in which participants endorsed basic Shona/Ndebele and perpetrator/victim binaries.<sup>197</sup> Superficially, the “tribe” has become central to the occurrence. I share a few narratives from the interviews to evince this point.

Sis’ Sipho stated:

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<sup>196</sup> This is a well cited definition of Gukurahundi which has been referred to by prominent authors writing about Zimbabwe such as the Catholic Commission Justice Report (CCJR), Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Peter Godwin, amongst other authors.

<sup>197</sup> Sabelo. J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, “Nation Building in Zimbabwe and the Challenges of Ndebele Particularism,” *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* 8, no. 3 (2008).

The Gukurahundi army was speaking in Shona to Ndebele people, so we couldn't hear or understand what they were saying, thus we were not able to establish why they were hitting us so brutally.<sup>198</sup>

MaMpofu shares similar sentiments, when she says:

They kept on speaking in Shona. Of course we did not understand the language, but you had to pretend that you knew what they were saying, because once you showed them that you didn't understand, you would be beaten even harder – so we just listened. Some things that were said ... we figured out simply from the intonation of the soldiers ... which were usually a set of harshly dispensed instructions.<sup>199</sup>

Zwelibanzi Malinga asserts:

The Ndebele were made to sing Shona songs such as Mai wa Dhikonde and Shumba Yenyika, which is why today, where I come from, when people say “listen ... they are speaking Shona ...” they link it to other things such as Gukurahundi even if it is not always directly related nor connected ... and they get upset.<sup>200</sup>

Another participant, Katherine, refers to this as “the zanufication or shonarisation” of Bulawayo and the rural spaces around it, through some kind of domination.<sup>201</sup> The similar examples given by both Katherine and Zwelibanzi Malinga were that government officials all speak and hold local meetings (usually meetings of national importance) in Shona, to the neglect of the existence of other identities. Language is thus becoming an ever present reality in the Gukurahundi narrative. Moreover, language usage is used to demonstrate and reinforce power dynamics then (and now). Katherine further stated that as a development practitioner, she notes that the region has been neglected and remains underdeveloped structurally.<sup>202</sup> About all this, Katherine asserts that it is a legacy of Gukurahundi, and that much resentment has come out of it. Sis' Siphso concludes these ideas by highlighting:

[E]ven when Ndebele people need things, they are so scared of offices as offices represent institutional repression and tribalism for them. We are all forced to speak Shona in Bulawayo ... even outside of spaces of business such as by the wayside, when you are stopped by traffic cops at a road block, in hospital, in a school setting ... they will have a conversation with you in that language. There will come a time when

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<sup>198</sup> Sis Siphso, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>199</sup> MaMpofu, April 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>200</sup> Zwelibanzi Malinga, April 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>201</sup> Katherine, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

everyone will put their foot down ... and say, “why do you expect me to speak Shona ... I do not understand!!!”<sup>203</sup>

As noted in chap. 1, authors such as Stoler, Vail, and Ranger caution against the simplistic use of ideologies around tribe and language, asserting that these identities are made,<sup>204</sup> and, in the case of Zimbabwe, were exacerbated through the Rhodesian “divide and rule” system. Vail emphasises ideas of the creation of tribes and tribalism within the Southern African context. These are comparable to the Zimbabwean experience as one finds that the same principles were enacted.<sup>205</sup> Ranger too speaks about the invention of tradition/culture in Zimbabwe in the 1930s, including collective reference to the Karanga, Zeruru and Manyika “nations” (amongst others) as the Shona of Zimbabwe for the purposes of “easier” administration.<sup>206</sup>

Spear points out that these colonial tribal inventions as currently understood have their limitations, noting, amongst other things, that “colonial power is often overstated in its ability to manipulate African institutions to establish hegemony – especially as African traditions are a lot more complex than they are often presented”.<sup>207</sup> Indeed, just as in the case of “Shona” nations, the notion of a “Ndebele” nationhood as currently conceived is neither accurate nor definitive, as its creation has been a cultural process of consolidation.<sup>208</sup> Ndlovu-Gatsheni, like Spear, asserts that colonialists did not invent “Ndebeleness”, as a Ndebele “nation” already existed in the 1820s, before the British colonisation of Zimbabwe, under its founding father Mzilikazi Khumalo.<sup>209</sup> Admittedly, a nation is not formed out of a single event, but rather is an ongoing process. As such, Mzilikazi’s role suggests the beginnings of such a formation. Ndlovu-Gatsheni therefore notes that colonialists may have re-invented or redefined notions around what were already existing nationhoods – thus enhancing divisions.<sup>210</sup>

Sufficeth to say, perhaps what carries currency in this whole Shona/Ndebele ideology, and which is not focused on enough, is a closer look at the entrance of the “consolidated” Ndebele nation and therefore identity into the country during Mzilikazi’s era (i.e. post Mfecane migrations of 1823). Some of the purported issues that the Shona and the Ndebele have with each other arise out of

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<sup>203</sup> Sis Sipho, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>204</sup> Ranger, *Bulawayo Burning the Social History of a Southern African City, 1893-1960*; Vail, “Introduction.”

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>206</sup> Ranger, *Bulawayo Burning the Social History of a Southern African City, 1893-1960*.

<sup>207</sup> Thomas T Spear, “Neo-Traditionalism and the Limits of Invention in British Colonial Africa,” *Journal of African History*. 44 (2003).

<sup>208</sup> Shari Eppel, “Matabeleland: Its Struggle for National Legitimacy, and the Relevance of This in the 2008 Election - Publications,” Heinrich Böll Stiftung Cape Town, 2014, <https://za.boell.org>.

<sup>209</sup> Ndlovu-Gatsheni, “Nation Building in Zimbabwe and the Challenges of Ndebele Particularism,” 37.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, 37

commonly used post-memory rhetoric today – whether true or falsely insinuated – that ‘the Ndebele stole our cows and women’; and that ‘the Ndebele deserve Gukurahundi as they were brutal and violent towards the Shona when they expanded their kingdom at the time of their migration.’

Over and above the meaning of the word Gukurahundi and the languages associated with its memory, I noted that almost all the participants whom I spoke to “mispronounced” or “misspelt” the word, calling it “Gukurawindi” or just “Gukura” for short. I was not able to ascertain whether this was done deliberately or not. A likely reason is that survivors who are not proficient Shona speakers do not know the proper pronunciation or spelling of the word – as it is unfamiliar lexicon to them. It could also be a form of defiance around the use of the term, entailing a refusal by survivors to pronounce it accurately. Alternatively, the use of “windi” in this pronunciation may derive from the statement “the wind or the early rain that separates or washes away the chaff, in preparation for the spring rains”. This seems to highlight that whilst most people may not have fully understood the meaning of the term Gukurahundi at the time of the occurrence, they have since heard that it had something to do with the wind blowing away the chaff, and now have juxtaposed this new knowledge into what they call it.

Additionally, many people were not sure if Gukurahundi relates to an action, an occurrence, or else if it is the name of an army. Gukurahundi over time has synonymously begun to mean all three of these aspects, though I could not ascertain whether this was the initial intention of the instigators of the term. Once again, the issue of the languaging of memory comes through.

Lastly, the use of the word Gukurahundi has also come to mean various things over and above its literal occurrence. For many people the word is used synonymously with the legacies of violence and different phases of human rights violations that have occurred in the country under the helm of the ZANU-PF-led government. Interview participant Jabulani Mpande speaks about a “Gukurahundi II” when he highlights the persecution of party officials of Morgan Tsvangirai’s opposition MDC in the 2008 elections, and which he states resulted in an estimated 500 deaths and many more disappearances and displacement.<sup>211</sup> The fact that Mpande qualifies it as Gukurahundi II is equally important: it highlights that Gukurahundi I and Gukurahundi II are not exactly the same thing, but rather that there is a noteworthy continuity – i.e. the suppression of political opponents – that can be linked, but is not reducible, to Gukurahundi I.

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<sup>211</sup> Jabulani Mpande, August 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

In concert with Jabulani Mpande's views, authors such as Bratton and Masunungure as well as Raftopoulous and Eppel corroborate ZANU-PF's attempts to annihilate and undermine the opposition through violence, torture, and threats during this period – often making a similar reference to Gukurahundi atrocities.<sup>212</sup> A bid by civil society to garner compensation for survivors affected by Jabulani Mpande's Gukurahundi II, galvanised discussion on the original Gukurahundi (Gukurahundi I), as there was an outcry that this compensation had to stem all the way back to 1982. The greater number of survivors interviewed view the renewed interest in making links between Gukurahundi and other occurrences of violence as being unfair. There is a feeling that Gukurahundi only comes on the agenda as an afterthought to issues such as attacks on the MDC. Only then is Gukurahundi given attention or seen as a national issue.

Additionally, Mutizwa writes about what he refers to as Gukurahundi ideology or "Gukurahundism" as a concept, not an event, in which political opponents are eradicated – and where perpetrators are not prosecuted – as they sacrifice their lives for the sake of the political party.<sup>213</sup> Essentially, Mutizwa refers to "Gukurahundism" as ongoing psychological warfare against the people for political gains, thus showing the continuum of this ideology to date at the national level.<sup>214</sup>

### 4.3 When Is Gukurahundi?

Gukurahundi occurred between 1982 and 1987, ceasing with the signing of the Unity Accord between the two nationalist parties – ZANU and ZAPU – on 22 December 1987.<sup>215</sup> However, for survivors, whilst the events related to Gukurahundi occurred between these specific years, the memories live on outside of these timelines. This is very common amongst survivors of mass violence. Additionally, these events remain very much alive today as the original causes and effects of Gukurahundi have yet to be addressed.

A backward-looking timeline of Gukurahundi is mostly told by the ex-ZIPRA participants in the research study, as well as the older age cohort of interviewees who lived through the liberation war. They insist that Gukurahundi started long before Zimbabwe's independence – it just might not have been termed "Gukurahundi" then. Participants such as Dungeni, Nkiwane, Maphosa, and

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<sup>212</sup> Michael Bratton and Eldred Masunungure, "Zimbabwe's Long Agony," *Journal of Democracy* 19, no. 4 (2008): 41–55; Solidarity Peace Trust, *Desperately Seeking Sanity: What Prospects for a New Beginning in Zimbabwe?* (Johannesburg: Solidarity Peace Trust, 2008).

<sup>213</sup> Ruyedzo Mutizwa, *Gukurahundi Ideology: Why Zimbabwe Is in Crisis* (Gweru, Zimbabwe: R. Mutizwa, 2010), 19–20.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>215</sup> See for example – Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe. and Legal Resources Foundation, *Breaking the Silence, Building True Peace*.



Ngulube tend to go all the way back to the guerrilla war and the fight for Zimbabwean independence, noting that Gukurahundi is evidence of a continuum of violence, the presence and articulation of which goes well back in time to before the stated period.<sup>216</sup> Ex-combatants assert that clashes in Mgagao, Tanzania, for instance, where ZIPRA and ZANLA cadres (under the joint Zimbabwe People's Army - ZIPA ) turned on and killed each other in training camps – all in a bid to achieve political party homogeneity – are clear examples of opposition parties at loggerheads.<sup>217</sup> Participant Mama Keletso is a liberationist, who details the time she escaped and ran away from Tanzania on foot during this period.<sup>218</sup> These views and narratives of the ex-combatants are an active mobilisation for acknowledgement of their role, as well as their suffering, during Zimbabwe's liberation struggle.

Intriguingly, a large number of Gukurahundi survivors who did not necessarily fight the bush war, also spoke about the remembrance of being in a protracted state of war over a long period. Unlike liberationists, they mostly stated that Gukurahundi commenced in 1982, but referred to living through tensions and an untenable war environment in the 1970s. Coltart reiterates a similar narrative when he draws links between violence in different times and contexts as part of Zimbabwe's legacy.<sup>219</sup>

In this regard, it is useful not to treat Gukurahundi violence as having been isolated to the 1982–1987 period, as a *longue durée* historical view gives insight into why post-colonial governments, like Robert Mugabe's, have continued to use colonial violence strategies to entrench/remain in power across all its spaces/people. Thus, Gukurahundi-type actions were not a new phenomenon in 1982. Incidents such as the Entumbane Uprisings in 1981, during which ZANLA and ZIPRA cadres were still at war with each other, despite independence, continue to play a big part in framing the story.<sup>220</sup> Naturally, it could be argued that this fight for political hegemony between the two political entities during the liberation struggle cannot be compared to fighting for rulership after independence, considering that in the post-colonial period - one of those entities became the ruling party.

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<sup>216</sup> Dungeni, May 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.; Nkiwane, May 2016, Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.; Maphosa, April 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.; and Ngulube, May 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>217</sup> ZIPA – the Zimbabwe People's Army. This was formed as a coalition of the military wings of ZANU (ZANLA) and ZAPU (ZPRA) in 1976. It was strategically hoped that this army would transform itself into the joint political movement.

<sup>218</sup> Mama Keletso, April 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>219</sup> David Coltart, *The Struggle Continues: 50 Years of Tyranny in Zimbabwe* (Auckland Park, South Africa: Jacana Media, 2016), 66.

<sup>220</sup> Shari Eppel, "Matabeleland: Its Struggle for National Legitimacy, and the Relevance of This in the 2008 Election - Publications," Heinrich Böll Stiftung Cape Town, 2014.

It is important to recognise the differences between the actual Gukurahundi occurrence (1982–1987) and how the survivors talk about it. The forward-looking statement “*iGukurahundi ayipheli*” (Gukurahundi does not end) became a mantra amongst the majority of participants, who highlighted that there is always something that reminds them of its existence even when these occurrences are not Gukurahundi itself. It speaks to the long-term impact of Gukurahundi, amongst other things. The sentiments that Gukurahundi originally gave rise to, continue to be felt unabated across time and space. Gukurahundi thus becomes a reference to a specific series of events within a specific time-frame, but at the same time, and in contrast, also becomes a reference to forms of oppression or forms of living, resisting, and surviving in the long term.

For Sis’ Siphio, it is the reality that she lost her parents and key family members, and thus had no choice but to be a primary caregiver at the age of seven for her younger siblings in a child-headed household.<sup>221</sup> Sis’ Siphio and her siblings were eventually shared amongst remaining and begrudging relatives who had their own families to take care of, and thus were all raised in “bits and bobs” in separate homes – orphaned and destitute. Sis’ Siphio asserts that she was used and treated as a slave under these circumstances, even by relatives, resulting in a strained association with family. Furthermore, her as well as her sibling’s education opportunities under such circumstances were curtailed, and this has today resulted in a loss of socio-economic engagement amongst some of them.

For Rasta, it is the fact that he never had an opportunity to finish high school and was forced to flee the country in that period due to severe torture by Gukurahundi army soldiers, who despite interrogating him in his school uniform on the way to class, beat him up insisting that he was a dissident.<sup>222</sup> Rasta has lived in South Africa illegally without documentation for decades and works as a farmhand. He states that events catapulted by Gukurahundi have resulted in his life being stagnant. He asserts that he lacks socio-economic opportunities as he is not educated and does not have the opportunity to enjoy full citizenry rights as a Zimbabwean, nor as a South African at that.<sup>223</sup>

Many participants stated that they are reminded of Gukurahundi mostly at election times, because this is the period in which the fear and threats of “voting for ZANU” resurge. Participants stated that they are “reminded” that voting for the “wrong party” (i.e. anything that is not ZANU) will have ramifications – and that they should remember Gukurahundi. Hlabangana said:

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<sup>221</sup> Sis Siphio, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>222</sup> Rasta, November 2015. Interviewed in Johannesburg, South Africa.

<sup>223</sup> Rasta, November 2015. Interviewed in Johannesburg, South Africa.

I suffer the most at elections. During this time we know that intimidation will be there; people disappear; there are unnecessary detainments in jail ... especially when they realize that you have the confidence to say a lot of stuff, and that you know your rights ... you become a target for silencing.<sup>224</sup>

Godwin's book, *The Fear*, draws attention to some of these intimidation on-goings in Zimbabwe at different periods, under Robert Mugabe's rulership.<sup>225</sup>

The pregnancies that came out of sexual violations during the time of Gukurahundi became a consistent reminder of the occurrence into the future, way after the 1987 Unity Accord. One raises children who are a tangible presence of a timeless occurrence. In some instances, children born in this time have names representing the atrocity, making them into memory capsules. I interviewed participants with children born of rape named Zonda (anger), Victim, and Xola (forgive/be at peace), for instance. I have not gone into detail on these specific memories as they are covered extensively later in the thesis, particularly in the discussion on gender and memory in chap. 6.

#### **4.4 Where Did Gukurahundi Happen?**

Gukurahundi occurred in the Matabelelands provinces and the Midlands because of the large ZAPU following there. The widely-held view by participants in the study, as well as by researchers in general, is that Gukurahundi largely had a rural presence. This is mostly true, but not necessarily always the case, as it currently even has a diaspora presence in select spaces, such as South Africa and Botswana, which were accessible geographies for those that left the country during that time (for example). Seemingly, the larger number of Matabeleland persons living in the diaspora – whilst an impact of Gukurahundi – is also exacerbated by the current socio-economic and political experience of life in Zimbabwe today.

Participants said that they believed attempts at Gukurahundi started in the urban areas, but were brief, as these areas proved to be more populous places. In other words, urban spaces were a difficult environment for the Fifth Brigade to successfully function in, without censure. Zwelibanzi Malinga highlights the following:

I remember... I think in 1983 ... on my way to school ... that particular day the police and the army blocked all roads to town. Luveve road was blocked. Cars were being searched – we had to come out. The following day there was a plane in Mpopoma

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<sup>224</sup> Hlabangana, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>225</sup> Peter Godwin, *The Fear: The Last Days of Robert Mugabe* (Pan Macmillan, 2011).

which was announcing saying “you are now surrounded don’t come of your houses”. So we had to stay in our houses and then the army started going house by house searching each house. I think they were looking for weapons or ex-ZPRA people.<sup>226</sup>

Given that these high density areas in Bulawayo were completely surrounded by the police and the army, according to Zwelibanzi, Toto Nkosi, and other participants in the research, there is thus evidence of an urban presence at the early onset of Gukurahundi. It however did not remain an urban phenomenon, as the shift to the rural areas had the longest and more persistent presence during its occurrence. In urban areas, Gukurahundi was mostly seen or often referred to as the cordon and search era.<sup>227</sup> According to Zwelibanzi, during these searches, police and/or soldiers would look for ZAPU paraphernalia in homes and make arrests particularly where they found ZAPU things.<sup>228</sup>

These included a badge, along with an orange t-shirt with Nkomo’s face on it, both written Father Zimbabwe. The badge was placed on a hat on one’s head and you would disappear if you wore it – as did our neighbour in Mpopoma Flats. Then there was also a white t-shirt with a picture of a soldier carrying a kid and it was written Patriotic Front for ZAPU. I remember those t-shirts and other things at home were hidden. The pictures of our relatives who were guerrillas during liberation – we had to hide them. If you were found with a picture of ZPRAs, they would think you now have links with dissidents.<sup>229</sup>

The soldiers also took with them ZIPRA persons who were currently serving in the army and off-duty at that specific time (i.e. whom they found in their homes) – essentially detaining their colleagues.<sup>230</sup> The only issue with these memories, as shared by participants, is in corroborating whether it was indeed the Gukurahundi army – as these cordon and search activities could have been accomplished by other security actors such as the Police Internal Security Intelligence (PISI), for example, or a different Zimbabwean National Army (ZNA) brigade/unit, and not necessarily the Fifth Brigade specifically. Most civilians admit that they are not always able to tell apart the different units, battalions, and brigades, and the army and police personnel around them. Even though the Gukurahundi army stood out with their red berets, for survivors, all institutions of violence and torture – in uniform – represent the same security personnel and by

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<sup>226</sup> Zwelibanzi Malinga, April 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>227</sup> Ndebele, Z. Gukurahundi Genocide – 36 Years Later. <https://youtu.be/Q2b5iVGCDs0>

<sup>228</sup> Zwelibanzi Malinga, April 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.; and Toto Nkosi, June 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

<sup>229</sup> Zwelibanzi Malinga, April 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>230</sup> Ndebele, Z. Gukurahundi Genocide – 36 Years Later. <https://youtu.be/Q2b5iVGCDs0>

default the same ZANU structures. It often does not matter if a violation was specifically committed by the Gukurahundi army or not. If it happened during that specific time, they are likely to attribute it to the Fifth Brigade.

Whilst there was a brief initial presence of “Gukurahundi-type occurrences” in Bulawayo, there was a swift move towards the rural areas. One is likely to presuppose that the presence of journalists, etc. could have impacted this early exit. Curfews and strict travelling embargoes in this era would have made it difficult for a journalist, for example, to follow this story into rural spaces. Ultimately, Gukurahundi would not have had longevity in urban spaces as it would have been difficult to kill people en masse and bury them in such dense/crowded spaces. In that regard, a geographical move could have been part of the discretionary means used, and one of the reasons why the government would later deny the existence of Gukurahundi. Additionally, the presence of “dissidents” was believed to be in the rural areas, so it made sense for the army to operate there.

Participants in the study asserted that one of the reasons they suffered immensely from Gukurahundi has to do with their lack of a network in urban spaces. Many who were deemed to survive were fortunate to have relatives in Bulawayo. A move to Bulawayo at the early onset of, or else during, Gukurahundi almost guaranteed some sort of survival. Participants highlighted that people who had no urban network, or family, or means (as well as resources) to escape and start a new life in Bulawayo would thus have had to remain in their specific geographical community and await their fate. Mama ka Zonda states:

As long as you had a means – money – there was a possibility that one could outlast Gukurahundi. Those that took their children collected them by night. There was a route which you had to take...and secret spots from which you had to walk to get the transport ... and leave with your child there to be picked up. Usually parents who worked in town (Bulawayo) came to collect their children. Those remaining behind had nowhere else to go.<sup>231</sup>

MaNcube said:

Some of us did not have opportunities to run away and find refuge in the city of Bulawayo. Also, how big was this Bulawayo that it could absorb such a huge population fleeing. Could it accommodate all these nations? Can you see how many

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<sup>231</sup> Mama ka Zonda, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

we are [pointing]? Can you imagine any family in Bulawayo having to keep an extended family of 12, 14 people just like that?<sup>232</sup>

Under these circumstances, Sis' Siphos eventually moved to town (synonymously used to refer to Bulawayo) after her home had been burnt down by the army and her parents had passed away in the fire. Being in town, amidst lack and hardship, safeguarded her life during Gukurahundi.<sup>233</sup>

The ZANU government thus accomplished "Gukurahundi" in Bulawayo specifically in the townships (high-density areas) through cordon and search practices. The low-density areas of Bulawayo would largely have been home to white persons at that time, since it was two years into independence. Participants assert that during Gukurahundi there were deliberate attempts even amongst those who lived in urban Bulawayo's high-density suburbs to go and seek refuge amongst family/with relatives who had bought houses in Bulawayo's suburbs (low-density areas) post-1980, as these were considered safer spaces and not under cordon and search.<sup>234</sup> Thus, certain geographies offered shelter from Gukurahundi, while others could not offer the same form of protection.

Amongst the rural areas, certain areas were hotspots over others. For example, residents from Gwanda are convinced and insistent that across the road from them (i.e. the highway which separates them from the Filabusi area by a stone's throw), select communities within Filabusi were not as affected nor experienced the Gukurahundi army in the same way that they did. There is a constant belief amongst participants that Enos Nkala (a senior Ndebele ZANU official at the time) hailed from a rural home in that vicinity and had relatives within that community. Thus, strict instructions were given to the Fifth Brigade that pockets of this Filabusi area were not to be affected by violence. To this end, Gogo Thandeka said:

Enos Nkala comes from that community which is across the road. He obviously did not want his people to be affected – so he made sure that they were not targeted or harmed.<sup>235</sup>

Jabulani Mpande states that areas such as Nkayi, Tsholotsho, Silobela, Matopo (Bhalagwe areas), Kezi, Lupane, and Plumtree were areas known as the homes or else birthplaces of ardent ZAPU

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<sup>232</sup> MaNcube, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>233</sup> Sis Siphos, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>234</sup> During this time there was the mass migration of white persons leaving Zimbabwe and moving towards South Africa as they had apprehensions about living under black rulership post-independence.

<sup>235</sup> Gogo Thandeka, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

senior officials, members, and supporters, and so were targeted by the Gukurahundi army more than others.<sup>236</sup>

Jabulani Mpande also notes that other places such as Murewa in Mashonaland East were strongholds of ZAPU – outside of the Matabelelands and Midlands provinces – and yet the Fifth Brigade was not deployed to those parts of Zimbabwe. Toto Nkosi shares the same sentiments when he highlights that places such as Hurungwe in Mashonaland West – were home to Shona-speaking peoples who were among ZAPU’s strongest supporters. They seek answers to why these geographies were treated differently, as they too represented ZANU opposition.

## **4.5 Understanding What Gukurahundi Is**

### **4.5.1 Gukurahundi – The Administered Plan**

In response to the interview question, “what is Gukurahundi?”, participants in the research highlighted, as a starting point, that Gukurahundi was a thought-through and orchestrated plan, executed by a ZANU-PF administration, whose goal was to see it successfully accomplished. Gogo MaMoyo referred to it as “Gukurawindi... that plan of Mugabe’s to dismantle ZAPU ... the plan of that man with the spectacles – that one ... hmmn” – thus placing the occurrence at the hands of an individual and holding him, as the then leader of the party (ZANU-PF) and prime minister of the country, specifically to account.<sup>237</sup>

Mthombeni is a survivor, who from March 1984 onwards lived for over three months at Bhalagwe mine – a site of Gukurahundi memory, where, as an execution camp, many awaited death and were sent down mines shafts. He asserts that Bhalagwe was thoroughly administered and that the rigorous organisation of the soldiers and their administrators was aimed towards fully implementing the strategy. Mthombeni highlights:

[T]he soldiers at Bhalagwe were serious about their record keeping. They went as far as taking our fingerprints even. Perhaps they got rid of that evidence later on ... but in my time there ... they certainly had information about who we were.<sup>238</sup>

Several authors also push forward the view that Gukurahundi was planned and then fully executed. Doran, based on declassified cables and documents from the Australian Government, emphasises that there are reports which provide clear evidence in the form of diplomatic

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<sup>236</sup> Jabulani Mpande, August 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

<sup>237</sup> Gogo MaMoyo, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>238</sup> Mthombeni, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

correspondence and intelligence assessments, along with raw intelligence obtained from spies, substantiating the idea that Mugabe “was the prime architect of well-planned and systematically executed killings through Gukurahundi”.<sup>239</sup> Amongst the several people interviewed, Doran spoke to senior ZANU persons/leaders such as Msipa and Sekeramayi, who stated that the killings “were the result of formal, broad-based decisions taken by ZANU-PF leadership”.<sup>240</sup>

Coltart puts forward the idea that there was an intention to take lives from the onset at the conception of the new Zimbabwe. He writes:

[J]ust a few days before Mugabe’s first opening of parliament, on 8 May 1980, Mugabe had attended Josip Tito’s funeral in Yugoslavia, where he met North Korean president Kim Il-Sung on the sidelines. It is suspected that it was during this meeting that Mugabe first discussed the establishment of a special brigade to quell internal dissent, which would be trained by North Koreans.<sup>241</sup>

In similar vein, echoing Coltart’s suspicions, Eppel says it is believed that:

Mugabe entered into an agreement with the North Koreans to train a praetorian guard that would answer to him personally ~ it was extraneous to the rest of the army, and was trained by the North Koreans in peculiar contrast to the rest of the army trained and integrated by the British.<sup>242</sup>

Eppel highlights that it is no coincidence that this army was “answerable to President Robert Mugabe himself, being outside of the usual army command structures”.<sup>243</sup> She further notes, as does the CCJP report of 1997, that this “red-bereted army” was deployed in a series of cycles between 1982 and 1987 as the army took time to retreat, return to base for more training, and strategise further on the way forward<sup>244</sup> – therefore highlighting the levels of planning around the existence of such an army.

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<sup>239</sup> Stuart Doran, *Kingdom, Power, Glory: Mugabe, Zanu and the Quest for Supremacy, 1960-1987*, 2017.; also see Start Doran. New documents claim to prove Mugabe ordered Gukurahundi killings. [www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com) [19 May 2015]

<sup>240</sup> Ibid. Also, Cephass Msipa was a retired Zimbabwean politician and author who used to be a politburo member of ZANU-PF (although formerly a ZAPU member before the Unity Accord). He served in several senior positions, including being the Governor of the Midlands Province at the time of his retirement in 2014. Sydney Sekeramayi is a Zimbabwean politician (ZANU) who served in several leadership capacities within the government of Zimbabwe, to include Minister of Defence (2002 – 2009)(2013 – 2017).

<sup>241</sup> Coltart, *The Struggle Continues*, 112.

<sup>242</sup> Eppel, “Matabeleland,” 3–4.

<sup>243</sup> Eppel, “‘Gukurahundi’: The Need for Truth and Reparation,” 44–45.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.



Several other questions can be asked based on the citations above. For example, one can question why ZANU, supported throughout the Second Chimurenga by the Chinese, went to seek support from the North Koreans specifically.<sup>245</sup> Interview participant, Toto Nkosi insisted that:

North Koreans are taught to worship a leader. Their inclinations are that any possible challengers to Mugabe (the leader) are seen as a threat and must always be destroyed at all costs. The Gukurahundi army, as trained by the North Koreans went into the villages to intensify ZANU existence. Propaganda. And flooded the place with ZANU PF cards. These cards were literally planted everywhere – so much so that when they were rallies, a whole jungle of people ... 250,000 would come out, carrying these ZANU cards as civilians too had noticed that this was an integral aspect of their survival.

Seemingly, whether or not there is substantial evidence to prove that there was a systematic and strategised Gukurahundi plan, the intention behind the atrocity is certainly incriminating, and this is reinforced by the ideas highlighted above.

#### **4.5.2 Gukurahundi – A Casualty of Cold war Politics**

Gukurahundi is seen as a casualty of Cold War politics, in which view the occurrence is more than something simply limited to Zimbabwe and its borders in isolation from global politics. Admittedly, this view was shared by a smaller cohort of participants, namely those who stated that they had heightened knowledge of historical and political events, obtained formally and informally through life experiences and through wide reading or from other sources.<sup>246</sup>

In explaining the Cold War, Ndlovu-Gatsheni states:

the duality between capitalism and socialism that manifested itself as competition between the Western and the Eastern Blocs led by the USA and Soviet Union ~ were global modernist-emancipatory projects that unfolded according to the modernist logic of imperialism and coloniality, mediated by ideology and violence. Socialism and

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<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.* Eppel states that Koreans are known for one-party state structures and rule through terror if they must. Additionally, during this time of the cold war, China ZANU PFs ally was preoccupied with their split with Russia

<sup>246</sup> These include participants such as Jabulani Mpande and Tshabalala who are both former ZPRA combatants. Jabulani Mpande went into academia. Where Tshabalala started off in the Zimbabwe National Army and eventually worked for a large international developmental organization. I have chosen not to name it for purposes of anonymity.

Capitalism were fraternal twins of modernity. African liberation movements [armed and unarmed] became caught up in this struggle which was termed the cold war.<sup>247</sup>

Most of the guerrillas who had been trained during the liberation struggle acknowledged that ZAPU's affiliation with Russia during the liberation struggle was problematic for its settler colony, Britain, which had invested in Rhodesia.<sup>248</sup> As such, interviewee Brian Nyathi believes:

[W]hilst ZANU may have been put in power by the citizenry of the nation through the vote, it was also heavily influenced through decisions made at high level through international intervention. The liberation of Zimbabwe went beyond country arrangements – to include nations with vested socio-economic and political interests such as colonial Britain. What was the vested interest of these countries ...?<sup>249</sup>

Participant Tshabalala asserts that in Cold War politics,

the opposition party – ZAPU, as led by Joshua Nkomo and backed by Cuba and USSR amongst others – needed to be destroyed through an act such as Gukurahundi because there was the long-standing fear amongst Britain that the communists/socialists would have taken over their colonial territory and enabled the leadership of “terrorists”.<sup>250</sup>

It did not help that ZAPU was an armed opposition at the time.<sup>251</sup>

Zwelibanzi additionally highlights that this Cold War politics extended to the problem of Zimbabwe's neighbouring country, South Africa.

There was a fear that if ZAPU as trained by the Soviet Union continued to thrive as an opposition party in independent Zimbabwe – that they would support the Umkhonto we Sizwe armed struggle of ANC – enabling South Africa too to be indebted to the Soviets.<sup>252</sup>

This would not have been an unfounded fear since the “Wankie” and “Sipolilo” campaigns of 1967 and 1968 respectively are well-known joint collaborations between South Africa's ANC and ZAPU,

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<sup>247</sup> Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni, “The Idea of the African National Congress, Democratic Paradox and the Stubborn Spectre of Coloniality,” in *The Future We Chose*, ed. Busani Ngcaweni (Oxford: Africa Institute of South Africa, 2014), 210.

<sup>248</sup> “The Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), the armed wing of ZAPU, prided itself on superior military training and intelligence networks. ZIPRA was Russian trained and by the end of the war had operational tanks and air units”. See Eppel “Matabeleland”, 3.

<sup>249</sup> Brian Nyathi, November 2015. Interviewed in Johannesburg, South Africa.

<sup>250</sup> Tshabalala, April 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>251</sup> Eppel, “Matabeleland”, 3.

<sup>252</sup> Zwelibanzi Malinga, April 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

whereby these guerrillas joined hands to engage Rhodesian forces.<sup>253</sup> Liberationists such as Tshabalala drew attention to these efforts and emphasised the synergy between these movements, as well as with other frontline states, which included Mozambique, Tanzania, Angola, and Zambia. The independence of these frontline states and the impending independence of Zimbabwe brought closer to home the situation in South Africa itself.<sup>254</sup>

Through data-mining and other information sources, such as declassified US documents, Cameron provides evidence of a cable from the British High Commissioner in Harare to the British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Geoffrey Howe, on 24 June 1983, stating: “Zimbabwe was strategic for trade and investment; would influence the outcome of South Africa’s political issues through its positionality; and was ‘a bulwark against Soviet inroads’”.<sup>255</sup> This data seems to affirm much of what participants asserted.

Participants felt that amidst these global trends, the neo-liberal world – despite evidence – turned a blind eye to Gukurahundi and did not do anything. Cameron’s work provides clear evidence of the British ignoring the Gukurahundi atrocity, despite knowing of it.<sup>256</sup> Instead, they supported Robert Mugabe, despite his actions, as it would strengthen British ties with the country. Phimister says:

So unconcerned was the old colonial power by what was going on in Matabeleland that in August 1983 it even agreed to “re-train” Fifth Brigade officers. For both Britain and the United States, Zimbabwe was treated as a significant regional partner in a Cold War context compounded by the political passions and regional destabilization associated with apartheid South Africa.<sup>257</sup>

It supports the idea that the neo-liberal and colonial political gains associated with the Cold War were seen as being more important than the gross human rights violations that were occurring. Seemingly, the international world even went as far as awarding Robert Mugabe. In this regard, Jabulani Mpande notes:

Mugabe in 1983–84, during Gukurahundi – won an international prize for the sustainable end of hunger when there were actually food curfews and shortages in Matabeleland at that time. It was literally not important that 20,000 people were

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<sup>253</sup> Dabengwa, D. ZIPRA in the Zimbabwe War of National Liberation. *Soldiers in Zimbabwe’s Liberation War*. Eds. Bhebe, Ngwabi., and Ranger, T. O. London: J. Currey, 1995, 25.

<sup>254</sup> Tshabalala, April 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>255</sup> Hazel Cameron, “The Matabeleland Massacres: Britain’s Wilful Blindness,” *International History Review* 40, no. 1 (2018), 3.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, 2

<sup>257</sup> Phimister, “Zimbabwe is Mine”, 476.

being killed or were hungry – it was more important that the communists did not win.<sup>258</sup>

Incidentally, participants did not draw attention to the reality that ZANU–PF, during the Second Chimurenga War, was funded and supported by the Chinese, who also support a communist political theory derived from their leader, Mao Zedong.<sup>259</sup> Although China at this time had split doctrinally from the Soviet bloc because of varying ideas about the interpretation of Marxist ideology, including co-existence with the capitalist West, which the Soviet Union was more amenable to in comparison to China. ZANU too, similarly to ZAPU, endorsed these communist ideologies in some form or the other. What then would have made ZANU–PF a lesser communist threat than ZAPU, such that it warranted the ruling party receiving the endorsement (as above) from Britain over the latter?

#### **4.5.3. Gukurahundi – “Black-on-Black” Violence**

The term black-on-black violence is a loaded term, and perhaps it is within reason to further suggest that it is a problematic concept to use in the specific context of Zimbabwe. Notions of black-on-black violence are popularised ideas and gained prominence in describing the lives of young black males (and black communities overall) in America’s inner cities.<sup>260</sup> Clarke notes that this terminology gained currency when figures such as W.E.B Du Bois and E. Franklin Frazier who, in referring to black-on-black violence, argued that the alarming statistics associated with high levels of violence, particularly in black peri-urban American communities, were a result of certain conditions prevalent in the society – and not that black persons were inherently violent.<sup>261</sup> These conditions included: a very difficult historical legacy in the South, which included slavery; crowded living conditions in tenements; alcoholism; the prevalence of handguns; as well as poor and misleading statistical correlations being made between black and white homicide rates.<sup>262</sup>

In contexts such as South Africa, which is a more familiar space to neighbouring Zimbabwe, Ndlovu would argue that this commonly referred to, but manufactured, term black-on-black violence was made prevalent pre-colonially, during colonialism, and in the post-colonial era as a means to justify the need as well as the presence of the colonial saviour and its administration.

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<sup>258</sup> Jabulani Mpande, August 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

<sup>259</sup> Eppel, “Matabeleland”, 2014.

<sup>260</sup> Clarke, James. “Black-on-Black Violence.” *Society* 33, no. 5 (July 1996), 46

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, Also the author states that these statistics did not consider the lynching as well as murders of thousands of black folk with impunity for white persons - which remained under recorded.

The colonisers' stance is that whilst coming in as advocates of peace, democracy, and development, they were confronted by the abundance of tribal wars around them, which needed intervention.<sup>263</sup> Seemingly, colonial efforts to save these warring tribes intriguingly resulted in the plundering of natural resources, an endorsement of slavery, and racism.

The projection of the coloniser as the peace mediator to the peoples of the non-western world has a long history of formulation, mainly in popular anthropological works, but the power of the colonial discourse on violence among the colonised subjects, particularly the phenomenon of black-on-black violence lies not only in the invention of the cause, but also in inverting it.<sup>264</sup>

As such, Ndlovu states that in South Africa in the pre-colonial era (between 1810 and 1830):

[T]he myth of a self-generated black-on-black annihilation has nonetheless, been popularised by white writers, to such an extent that it became instrumental to the sustenance of the racist ideology by the apartheid regime.<sup>265</sup>

The apartheid government sought to deny its role in the violence of the 1980s by suggesting that black people continued to kill each other as they had done for centuries before colonialism began, and that this would continue to happen even after the apartheid system itself would end. Mfecane is used as an example of the black-on-black violence of "primitive Africa" or else the genocidal nature of black persons who would self-destruct if left to themselves. Mfecane refers to a period of forced migrations and ethnic warfaring amongst indigenous ethnic communities in southern Africa between 1815 and 1840. It must be noted that during the Mfecane era, the likelihood is that these people at the time never even thought of themselves as black; and that whatever their differences over which they were warring, were not likely to be understood by them as black-on-black violence. Ndlovu argues that one of the consequences of the pre-colonial and colonisation eras is that they created the conditions which made the Mfecane migrations necessary, through the presence of white settlers in pre-colonial southern Africa, which brought about an "encirclement complex" including "environmental and ecological factors, the slave trade and over population in select spaces".<sup>266</sup>

I used black-on-black violence for the purposes of this thesis, largely because certain participants referred to it in this manner when trying to describe "what Gukurahundi is to them". Participants

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<sup>263</sup> Morgan Ndlovu, "Manufacturing Black-on-Black Violence in Africa: A Decolonial Perspective on Mfecane and Afrophobia/Xenophobia in South Africa," *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies - Multi-, Inter- and Transdisciplinarity* *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies - Multi-, Inter- and Transdisciplinarity* 12, no. 2 (2017): 100–101.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, 101

<sup>266</sup> Ndlovu, "Manufacturing Black-on-Black Violence", 102.

such as Toto Nkosi have remained adamant in their use of such terminology when speaking about Gukurahundi. It must be noted that Toto Nkosi and other research participants speaking about black-on-black violence tend to be the respondents living in the diaspora – mainly, in South Africa – where this terminology currently has currency. Jabulani Mpande, also resident in South Africa, highlighted that “black-on-black” issues are about the ethnic.<sup>267</sup> He goes further than the ethnic and simply makes it about language in this assertion below:

The killer is from another tribe, and the victim is from another tribe. In Mashonaland ... even after independence ... I can tell you that Mugabe is a very violent leader and has definitely been violent even in Mashonaland ... however he curtails his level of violence there because it is his people, and as a result the casualties are not the same. There was dissident activity as well too in Mashonaland after independence. How come a Gukurahundi army was not sent there? <sup>268</sup>

When the specific term “black-on-black violence” was not used, it was alluded to. Throughout the research, participants highlighted that they ambitiously thought that once liberation had been attained by Zimbabwe’s black majority, all black people would live in freedom, equally, and in the absence of violence. The fact that through Gukurahundi, a fellow black leader (Robert Mugabe) and his party were at the head of violence meted out towards their black countrymen was unfathomable to them. Those interviewees who participated in the liberation war, such as Dungeni and Nkiwane, are the angriest about this because they felt that their guerrilla efforts and nationalist sacrifices (for indeed many lives were lost in the Rhodesian Bush War) were not acknowledged or recognised.<sup>269</sup> And worse still that they, along with their families or communities, became targets of violence – at the command of a fellow liberationist. That a fellow liberationist - who during the guerrilla war benefitted from community support – was now the same person persecuting African communities, was unfathomable to survivors.<sup>270</sup>

Naturally, there are loopholes in such thinking, i.e. that because independence had been attained, black people would automatically be peaceful just because they are black people and thus no longer have differences of any kind. This is an example of crude essentialist thinking. Perhaps the anger is not about the black-on-black argument per se, but it is more about the fact that Mugabe

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<sup>267</sup> Toto Nkosi, June 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

<sup>268</sup> Jabulani Mpande, August 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

<sup>269</sup> Mr. Dungeni, May 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.; Mr. Nkiwane, May 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>270</sup> See Heike Schmidt, *Colonialism & Violence in Zimbabwe: a History of Suffering* (Woodbridge, Suffolk : James Currey, 2013) whose writing is about colonial Zimbabwe and the liberation war, focuses in great detail on how nationalist leaders such as Mugabe would have benefitted from community mobilization and support for their guerrillas as their significant contribution to the armed conflict.

himself, as a liberator who endorsed a socialist ideology, failed to exemplify it in his leadership – thus enhancing inequalities amongst the Zimbabwean citizenry through events like Gukurahundi.

In this regard, the black-on-black violence is not conceived as a random act. It is believed to be violence aimed at destroying ZAPU structurally. In his documentary, Zenzele Ndebele details Gukurahundism within the Zimbabwe National Army itself.<sup>271</sup> Select trained ZAPU army personnel were persecuted and disappeared at the same time that Gukurahundi was happening in the villages.<sup>272</sup> Other soldiers simply felt disgruntled over the lack of representation in the integrated army and therefore defected in numbers.<sup>273</sup> Mama ka Zonda notes:

[S]oldiers must have had intelligence as they often went specifically to homes [both rural and urban] of ZPRA guerrillas as well as ZAPU supporters during Gukurahundi and asked, “where are *obhudi benu* [i.e. your brothers]”.<sup>274</sup>

Rasta remembers:

[T]here were some ZPRA liberation fighters who during Gukurahundi thought that by presenting *idimu* they would survive. Little did they know. *Idimu* was something that was given to liberationists. Some kind of a pension ... paperwork ... acknowledgement. I think they thought it would offer them some kind of protection. It eventually resulted in most of them [ZAPU soldiers] getting killed.<sup>275</sup>

Indeed, there is the realisation that prior to independence, Rhodesia was riddled with violence and that the Rhodesian Front (RF) was not guiltless in this regard.<sup>276</sup> Perhaps, if ZANU/ZAPU killings are what participants referred to as black-on-black violence, then this would be the equivalent of white-on-black killings?<sup>277</sup> Naturally, the term “black-on-black” only makes sense if placed in a racialised context in which the violence is racialised – i.e. where white-on-black violence has existed. An example of the RF’s brutality is cited by Coltart where he narrates that 84 Selous Scouts raided a suspected ZANLA base by the Nyadzonja river during the liberation struggle.

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<sup>271</sup> Ndebele, Z. Gukurahundi Genocide – 36 Years Later. <https://news.pindula.co.zw>

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid*, see also Eppel, “Matabeleland”, 3.

<sup>273</sup> Eppel, “Matabeleland”, 3.

<sup>274</sup> Mama ka Zonda, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>275</sup> Rasta, November 2015. Interviewed in Johannesburg, South Africa.

<sup>276</sup> Alexander et al., *Violence and Memory*, 2000.

<sup>277</sup> Whilst understanding that this speaks to race issues - I have categorically highlighted that participants and theorists use of terms such as black-on-black violence, and white-on-black or even black-on-white violence are categorisations which I find wanting, and an unnecessary academic distinction to make. Albeit, they are terms in existence.

It was a massacre – over two thousand people were killed. There was hardly any fire returned. There were no Selous Scouts fatalities and only one of them was seriously injured.<sup>278</sup>

The lack of casualties among the Scouts evince the fact that this was an unwarranted raid on largely unarmed and untrained people.<sup>279</sup> Whilst not condoning Robert Mugabe's behaviour, incidents like these show that he assimilated "unscrupulous governance habits" of violence and continued them through atrocities such as Gukurahundi, believing that he too would not have to account for the lives lost in the same manner that the RF under Ian Smith was never held to account for Nyadzonia and other violations.

The idea of viewing black-on-black violence as something that only occurred in the new Zimbabwe under Mugabe's dispensation is erroneous. It is also usually problematic to simply conceive the causes of violence solely through a racial lens, to the neglect of other factors. For example, during the guerrilla struggle, ZIPRA and ZANLA cadres often fought and killed each other, highlighting that black-on-black violence did not start with the new dispensation.

Ranger does not use the term black-on-black violence, but he does highlight in-fighting amongst various nationhoods in Bulawayo itself going as far back as the 1890s. He states that sparring and real jousting between "ethnic nations" or "tribal affiliation" in the city happened often and occasionally turned violent.<sup>280</sup> Additionally, Ranger writes about the police during this period – some of them black – working under Ian Smith's regime and before that under British colonial rule, who were often employed, relied upon, and at the forefront of terrorising fellow black citizens.<sup>281</sup> Admittedly, in some instances, the magnitude of the casualties might not have been as severe as Gukurahundi, but they were casualties all the same, thus representing cultures of violence meted out by black persons against each other.

Perhaps, what can best be surmised is that black-on-black violence, whilst existent, was possibly exacerbated by colonial structures, which needed to divide nationhoods further and localise power dynamics in order to rule over them. There is precedence of this happening in myriad countries, such as South Africa and Rwanda, at the hands of the colonial power.<sup>282</sup> Thus, Mugabe would have continued, through Gukurahundi and other human rights violations which followed,

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<sup>278</sup> Coltart, *The Struggle Continues*, 68 – 69.

<sup>279</sup> Coltart, *The Struggle Continues*, 69.

<sup>280</sup> Ranger, *Bulawayo Burning the Social History of a Southern African City, 1893-1960*.

<sup>281</sup> Ranger, *Bulawayo Burning the Social History of a Southern African City, 1893-1960*.

<sup>282</sup> S. Marks and S. Trapido, *The Politics of Race, Class, and Nationalism in Twentieth-Century South Africa* (London: Longman, 1987).



to endorse principles of divide and rule politically, socio-economically, and culturally to sustain his rulership.

Once again, it is buttressed that authors such as Vail and Stoler do not give the idea of tribe much credence, noting that the making or creation of tribes is itself invention.<sup>283</sup> This study found that whether notions of tribe (or “language” communities) are constructed or real, in the minds of many survivors and across generations, this notion is tangible to them and thus they believe it is at the root cause of the Gukurahundi issue. How and why such beliefs/myths gain currency across time needs to be explained by oral historians and others. Whatever the case may be, that felt perception need not be brushed away.

The black-on-black violence argument is generally problematic for various reasons. For starters, it invokes the image of “primitive Africa”, and I am not convinced that it is the best lens to help understand Gukurahundi. Simplistically one could ask, is violence any more acceptable when it is meted out by a black president on his white citizenry? Are Zimbabwe’s land invasions of white farms thus deemed a better violation at the hands of Mugabe, than was Gukurahundi? Are we saying that the lives of some Zimbabweans matter more than those of others? Throughout the interviews, respondents offered interesting ideas about race and ethnicity/nationhood/“tribes”. Zwelibanzi, for instance, asserted

It makes me mad at the international community up to now. I felt like to an extent their governments ignored when people were being killed, and they didn’t do anything. It was not important that 20,000 people – majority black lives were not accounted for in Gukurahundi. Years later when “white farmers” were being killed through land grabs – the world turned towards Zimbabwe to condemn Mugabe’s actions and intervene. It’s as if all those other lives of Gukurahundi were not important.<sup>284</sup>

In a similar vein to this thinking, Ndlovu-Gatsheni states:

[W]hite farmers [for instance] as part of the European diaspora [in Zimbabwe] carry ontological density that is higher than that of Africans in the racially hierarchized world system’s order of humanity.<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> Leroy Vail, “Introduction,” in *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (London; Berkeley: Currey; University of California Press, 1989); Ann Laura Stoler, “Epistemic Politics: Ontologies of Colonial Common Sense,” *Philosophical Forum* 39, no. 3 (2008).

<sup>284</sup> Zwelibanzi Malinga, April 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>285</sup> Gatsheni, “Idea of the African National Congress, 210.

Cameron comes to comparable conclusions when she writes:

instead, the Zimbabweans who were of concern to the British government and influenced their diplomatic approach, were the many white Zimbabweans living in the affected regions, and who were unaffected by the extreme violence of the Fifth Brigade.<sup>286</sup>

Kossler, writing about Namibia, noted the racialisation of even memory, specifically around the bodies of the dead, when he asserted:

[G]raves with fallen Germans in Namibia are marked and guarded, and are afforded some respect. But many of the ones for the killed African Herero remain unmarked. The treatment of the bodies is different. The lack of knowledge and finance paid towards African bodies is an issue.<sup>287</sup>

It is intriguing to note that in both the narratives of the liberation struggle and later Gukurahundi, whenever interview participants tell their stories, white persons' deaths are numbered, and their names are known. Black persons are not necessarily accounted for in the same manner, with many who are deceased not mentioned by name – except in the unique cases concerning people who were prominent and held leadership positions such as headmasters, local businessmen, nurses and doctors, as well as senior ZIPRA cadre members. Perhaps, this could also be influenced by the reality that it is hard to name 20,000 people due to their sheer number. Fatalities of white persons, such as farmers and missionaries, during Gukurahundi existed, but they are significantly less in comparison to black persons. I use a quote from Toto Nkosi to evince this. Toto Nkosi's specific example below speaks to the Second Chimurenga period, but similar sentiments are often shared about Gukurahundi and as such this is relatable.

I went to school at xxx until it was closed. Two missionaries were killed during the liberation war, so there was a whole violent closure in 1977. So that is when I had to move to xxx in Bulawayo. That was really the height of the liberation struggle where missions were being closed. For example, Thekwane in Plumtree was also closed down. The Salvation Army mission where I grew up – at some stage – actually moved particularly its white staff members from the very rural missions because it was unsafe.<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> Hazel Cameron, "The Matabeleland Massacres: Britain's Wilful Blindness," *International History Review* 40, no. 1 (2018), 2–3.

<sup>287</sup> Reinhart Kössler, "The Saga of the Skulls: Restitution without Recognition," in *Namibia and Germany: Negotiating the Past* (Windhoek: UNAM Press, 2015), 279–80.

<sup>288</sup> Toto Nkosi, June 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

During Gukurahundi specifically, Gogo MaMoyo notes:

St Luke's was a Roman Catholic run hospital, but many of these nuns, doctors, nurses and health personnel were killed. These include Maria the nun who was killed. At St Paul, for example, there was a Dr Decker, who loved people very much, and even took care of the orphans. He too was killed.<sup>289</sup>

White missionaries were targeted during Gukurahundi. They were likely to have been targeted for different reasons; namely that during Gukurahundi, as representatives of church institutions, they were in a position to witness and collect evidence of gross negligence of human rights within their congregational geographies. Some missionaries condemned the Government of Zimbabwe for its actions and were sympathetic to the situation at hand. For instance, participant Mthombeni attributes his release, and escape from imminent death, to a Roman Catholic priest at a mission in close proximity to Bhalagwe mine, who started to complain loudly to his sending church overseas about the suspected young men whose lives were being taken aimlessly and thrown into a hole. This injustice led him to begin to expose widely the covert happenings at Bhalagwe. According to Mthombeni, the soldiers seemingly aborted the mission and sent people back home.<sup>290</sup> Without taking away too much credence from Mthombeni's assertions, it is likely that the Bhalagwe camp was aborted, not just because of the priest's efforts alone, but because at some point the deaths became unsustainable and were starting to draw too much attention.

Some of these events or incidents become a strong vehicle through which memories are remembered as well as the lens through which they are shared. As common occurrence, a survivor will say something to the effect that "the Gukurahundi Army arrived in 1984 in April ... I remember this because we were on school holidays – and it was within the same week or round about the same time that Sister McDonald\* from St Luke's Hospital was murdered".

Perhaps, some of the additional questions to ask about, or interrogate, blackness or whiteness are: what is "blackness" and what is "whiteness"? When people were killed – "black" or "white" – during Gukurahundi, what was usually the aim? Were there differences in motivation, intention, and in magnitude? How do these variant experiences shape and impact the memories of Gukurahundi, if indeed they are a factor? Whilst there is a lot of literature which could speak to these questions, I shall not engage these discussions as they are not a key thematic area of this study, even as it is a finding.

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<sup>289</sup> Gogo MaMoyo, December 2014. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

<sup>290</sup> Mthombeni, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

Lastly, another categorisation of what Gukurahundi is, as narrated by survivors, is that they were told by the Fifth Brigade that through Gukurahundi, “they” were settling old scores. In this case, it is likely to have been less about politics, and more of a natural outcome of the cultural and historical differences people have. Essentially, such an action too is a type of “black-on-black” violence, and I have therefore included it in this particular section. Depending on one’s historical perspective, it can be argued that Gukurahundi was intended to settle “supposed” old scores. I earlier highlighted in both chaps. 1 and 4 the historical origins of the making of Mzilikazi Khumalo’s Ndebele nation as stemming back to include Mfecane and Nguni-Sotho nation-building strategies of the 1820s, which resulted in their migration and entry into present-day Zimbabwe.<sup>291</sup> It is purported that clashes between nations during this era, as well as conquering and assimilation strategies, left much resentment. Thus, in an attempt to settle these old cultural scores through the act of Gukurahundi, new inequalities and injustices abound in the process. Mama ka Zonda states that in her community the soldiers reiterated the following when torturing them

“We want our cattle!!! Your grandfathers came and stole our cattle, so we want them back”. They kept saying “*Mombe dzako Sekuru*”. I think the soldiers were just telling stories. We had never heard of such stolen cattle, so we did not know what they were talking about. If ever you asked them “which cattle?”, they would retaliate by making you lie down and beat you up fervently with a log.<sup>292</sup>

This insistence on the return of the cows could show the early onset of a resource crunch or a struggle for economic resources. Alternatively, there could be a perceived feeling and a resentment that in “the specific era invoked” the “Ndebele” person was once a dominant violent entity – who as the perpetrator, victimised, and stole from the “Shona”. Gukurahundi, if it is believed to be a socio-cultural occurrence would then have been intended to balance the scales generations later, with the Shona exacting revenge for past offences. Naturally, if one insists on this argument, it would need to be highlighted who the Ndebele and who are the Shona are, amidst socio-cultural fluidity. Whilst such an argument seems laughable, this felt perception (as highlighted by the soldiers, according to participants, but not the participants themselves) matters, and should be addressed amongst other intergenerational memory solutions.

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<sup>291</sup> Ndlovu – Gatsheni, “Nation Building in Zimbabwe”, 37.

<sup>292</sup> Mama ka Zonda, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

#### 4.5.4. Gukurahundi – Genocidal

Admittedly, participants did not always use the word genocide specifically when sharing what Gukurahundi is, but it was certainly alluded to in characteristic by most persons. I did not introduce the term “genocide” or any other to respondents, as I wanted to intently hear the specific but variant narratives of survivors based on their personal views on what to call it. More important, I was trying to hear who, or which actors, call it a genocide, and why this categorisation or others matter – as well as if this impacts the memory of the occurrence, if it is labelled a certain way. For instance, Hatzfield, in speaking about Rwanda, observes that perpetrators or killers never refer to their work as being genocidal but rather as a war, whereas survivors always insist on speaking about it as a genocide.<sup>293</sup>

Toto Nkosi made the bold assertion that he believes Gukurahundi was genocidal. However, he went further to say:

I may not be familiar with the technical definitions of genocide and so forth ... but where people are rounded up on the basis of the language they speak ... and their motives are inferred, just from “you speak this ... therefore you are a dissident supporter” ... the narrative becomes an accusation to that group of people ... and naturally the reason behind their genocidal deaths.<sup>294</sup>

Zwelibanzi Malinga also said it was a genocide because:

if you have 20,000 people being killed: civilians at that ... because it was not combatants, but unarmed people – civilians – professionals, teachers, etc. gunned down ... just random killing of people, random violating of rights to get a dissident.<sup>295</sup>

These two participants, out of a significant group of others who categorise Gukurahundi as genocidal, intriguingly are familiar with and endorse human rights discourses, with Zwelibanzi currently employed at an advocacy NGO and Toto Nkosi in academia. Additionally, participants like Zwelibanzi and Toto Nkosi represented a younger generational cohort of interviewees, with Zwelibanzi sharing his stories of Gukurahundi as they happened to him at the age of eight, whilst Toto Nkosi was a 16-year-old teenager at the time it happened.

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<sup>293</sup> Hatzfield, *A time for Machetes*, 145.

<sup>294</sup> Mr. Toto Nkosi (Toto), June 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

<sup>295</sup> Mr. Zwelibanzi Malinga, April 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

The often cited and already discussed 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide defines genocide as “acts committed with the intent to destroy in part, a national, ethnical [*sic*], racial or religious group”. Further, these “acts” in the convention include killing, causing serious bodily and/or mental harm, inflicting conditions to destroy a group, preventing births, and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.<sup>296</sup> Using the above definition, certain aspects of the Gukurahundi *modus operandi* are genocidal in nature and design. For instance, authors such as Cameron note that through Gukurahundi, there were deliberate attempts to starve the populace.<sup>297</sup> Eppel reiterates:

[T]he use of food for political means by the ZANU-PF in fact dates back to 1984, when a strictly enforced food curfew brought the Matabeleland South population of around 400,000 to the brink of starvation during the Gukurahundi era. Political abuse of food resonates in a particular way in Matabeleland, being linked as it is to the massacres of the 1980s.<sup>298</sup>

Brian Nyathi corroborates this when he shares his experience:

[F]or instance, during Gukurahundi times when they introduced the curfew, they banned most of the things ... from killing your own cow [livestock] and eating it. They banned those things to make us suffer. The grinding mills were all shutdown. We were not even allowed to use a cart.<sup>299</sup>

Deliberate starvation is essentially “inflicting a condition to destroy a group”.

Another example participants identified as leading to Gukurahundi being genocidal was the obsession with killing mothers who were pregnant by splitting their stomachs open. MaMpofu highlights that during her pregnancy, her family feared for her the most when they happened upon a Gukurahundi army in the community, as they were notorious for targeting expectant mothers and killing unborn babies.<sup>300</sup> MaMpofu notes that during Gukurahundi,

the ripping open [of] the abdomen of live pregnant women who inevitably died – was common. The army is alleged to have committed all these atrocities on the grounds that they were eliminating dissidents before they were born to prevent them from coming to cause trouble.<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> Lupel & Verdeja, *Responding to Genocide*, 159

<sup>297</sup> Cameron, “The Matabeleland Massacres”.

<sup>298</sup> Eppel, “Matabeleland”, 2.

<sup>299</sup> Mr. Brian Nyathi, November 2015. Interviewed in Johannesburg, South Africa.

<sup>300</sup> MaMpofu, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>301</sup> J. Mpofu, *My Life in the Struggle for the Liberation of Zimbabwe*, (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2014), 209.

Other participants such as MaNcube and Gogo Thandeka believe that the army did the opposite, i.e. that they raped women with the idea that if they did get pregnant it would be good, because if a pure “Ndebele” bloodline did exist – which it does not<sup>302</sup> – then such actions would ensure that the ethnic nation was watered down or reduced “in part”.

Sexual violence during Gukurahundi can be understood as a form of ethnic cleansing. Research conducted by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe and the Legal Resources Foundation reported that people in Matabeleland spoke of rapes being committed to “dilute” the Ndebele by producing Shona babies.<sup>303</sup>

Most gruesome is an action and a phrase that abounds in this period – “*ukugiga abantwana*”, which literally means pounding babies in pestle and mortar with the stated intention that these born babies would not live to become dissidents themselves, or else of ensuring that the population count of Ndebele persons would be greatly reduced, particularly in the next generation.<sup>304</sup> Mama Keletso narrates that this gruesome practice was prevalent in the Rhodesian era as well.

Ian Smith’s soldiers who travelled from Mozambique to Beitbridge told people to physically pound their babies in a bid to avoid the influx of future liberation guerrillas. Parents had to do that, and the soldiers would tell you we don’t want to see your tears. Afterwards they would kill you.<sup>305</sup>

Not all children were pounded. They were killed, in various other ways.

A hospital doctor told me this: “If I pulled out any number of copies of death certificates of 6month old babies who died between 1982 and 1985 I would not be surprised if 75% of them died from bayonet wounds inflicted by the Army”.<sup>306</sup>

The types of killings lend themselves to being genocidal. Pounding babies is gruesome. In the same way that dumping bodies down mine shafts, cutting the foetus out of women, along with the many other tortures and physical harms which were prevalent in this time, are repugnant. Several authors highlight the torture and indignity involved, noting that:

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<sup>302</sup> “While Ndebele identity has been incorporative of other identities, there are limits to this process, and linguistic minorities have also been mobilized in peripheral districts against Ndebele dominance. However, what unites Matabeleland is a shared history” Eppel, “Matabelelands”, 2. Footnote 6.

<sup>303</sup> K. Thomas, M. Masinjila, and E. Bere, “Political Transition and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in South Africa, Kenya, and Zimbabwe: A Comparative Analysis,” *Gender Dev. Gender and Development* 21, no. 3 (2013): 527–28.

<sup>304</sup> Sis’ Siphoshe, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>305</sup> Mama Keletso, April 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>306</sup> J. Mpfu, *My Life in the Struggle for the Liberation of Zimbabwe*, (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2014), 209.

objects such as bottles, sticks and soil were inserted into women's genitals, inflicting extreme pain and causing permanent injuries. Some women were forced to have sexual intercourse with relatives.<sup>307</sup>

Ultimately all these actions not only caused bodily or mental harm, but destroyed family and community life, and certainly were efforts intended to prevent births. In this regard, participants highlighted Gukurahundi's genocidal characteristics – even when they did not necessarily use the word genocide.

A cohort of interviewees was unfamiliar with the word genocide, or rather did not use it, but noted that many among the generation of younger advocates pushes this agenda.<sup>308</sup> (I do not discuss this in detail here as it is analysed at length in chap. 7 on intergenerational memories). These participants stated that if Gukurahundi being recognised as a genocide or called a genocide results in it gaining international traction and being addressed, then they are happy to label it as such. They will call it whatever is needed to provoke a response. Eltringham highlights Western consciousness of the Holocaust, the genocide of Jews in Europe, and details – albeit with some scepticism – why countries such as Rwanda (and in this case Zimbabwe, by default) are therefore eager to not only use the same genocidal label, but will also go as far as using Holocaust literature, or at least Holocaust analogy, as a point of reference, and in some cases, as the dominant paradigm through which these other events are explained.<sup>309</sup>

What can be highlighted briefly is that where the word genocide is not used by participants, such as Gogo Thandeka and fellow liberators like Ngulube, perhaps it is because it is unfamiliar to them, or rather that Gukurahundi means something else to them. In that regard, the term *umbangazwe* (i.e. fighting for the rulership of the nation) is the alternative phrase which was used prevalently by participants to speak about Gukurahundi. Essentially, this is incidentally the same phrase that they used when they were speaking about the liberation war, which was the struggle for the black majority to rule over the nation. In this regard, survivors are associating Gukurahundi as being about political strife between ZANU and ZAPU for rulership, with ZANU quashing the opposition. Alternatively, it could mean that participants are making a linkage and seeing a continuum between the events of the liberation war and Gukurahundi. This is not

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<sup>307</sup> Thomas, et al., "Political transition and sexual and gender-based violence", 527 – 528.

<sup>308</sup> These include participants such as Mr. Hlabangana, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe; Mr. Mthombeni, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe; MaMpofu, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe; and Gogo Thandeka, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>309</sup> Nigel Eltringham, *Accounting for Horror Post-Genocide Debates in Rwanda* (Londres; Sterling, Va.: Pluto Press, 2004).



surprising considering quite a few of the liberators (but not solely the liberators) fall under the category of people who say Gukurahundi is *umbangazwe*.

Where a very small group of survivors did not explicitly refer to Gukurahundi as a genocide, nor as *umbangazwe*, they highlighted that it was an attempted genocide. The tenet of this idea is that a genocidal plan may have existed but was not fully executed for various speculative reasons. Thobela Moyo who strongly believes this idea said:

Umm ... my basic understanding of the occurrence is that Mugabe tried to wipe out the Ndebele nation ... for some reason ... so they tried ... but then the people fought back ... and then ... until those guys who were trying to wipe us out couldn't anymore ... they had to just give up.<sup>310</sup>

According to Thobela's narrative, (which has glaring inaccuracies, but is his felt perception all the same), the reason this attempted genocide was not successful is that the effort was thwarted by the targeted populace who fought back. He continues on to say:

I think it was an attempted genocide because it took off the ground, and went on for a while ... but it could have been worse than that. The genocides that I think of, for example, are like the one in Rwanda. That one was a proper genocide. Many people died. It is because of the numbers ... and how bad things really were.<sup>311</sup>

In this regard, Thobela's ideas seem to fall in line with Semelin's that "genocide is that particular process of civilian destruction that is directed at the total eradication of a group, the criteria of which it is determined by the perpetrator".<sup>312</sup> Therefore, that unless the total group is eradicated, essentially it is not a genocide. A closer look at the 1948 Genocide Convention mentioned earlier reveals that it does not have to be the extermination of an entire group, but of "a whole or a part of a group".<sup>313</sup> It can never be said that a whole group has been eradicated and it would otherwise be difficult to delineate what the boundaries of an entire ethnic group look like. In lieu of such constrained conceptualisation, most genocides would only ever be attempted – using this as a framework.

Incidentally, the word *politicide*, as I suspected, was not used at all throughout participants' discussions; whereas authors such as Godwin have given it priority as a term and necessitated that the term is used separately from the word genocide. It is interesting to see the disjuncture

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<sup>310</sup> Mr. Thobela Moyo, May 2014. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

<sup>311</sup> Mr. Thobela Moyo, May 2014. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

<sup>312</sup> J. Semelin, "Encyclopedia on Genocides and Massacres", *Journal of Genocide Research*, (September 1, 2005).

<sup>313</sup> Article 2 of the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948)

between the terminology used by survivors, on the one hand, and that used by institutions such as the United Nations, for example, and academic categorisations, on the other hand, when speaking about experiences of the same violence. It is possible that the phrases politicide and *umbangazwe* are “language[d]” differently and yet mean the same thing – as they both speak about one political party needing to survive to the detriment of the other. Then again, these two “language[d]” phrases very well might not be speaking about the same thing – and it is absolutely acceptable that each actor has explained it according to their own understanding. In a nutshell, scholars’ definitions are usually not neatly aligned or reflected in survivor narratives/categorisations and this makes for interesting analysis and findings in this research. Godwin maintains that whereas genocide is an attempt to wipe out an ethnic group, a politicide would be the practice of eliminating a political movement.<sup>314</sup> Politicides are not accounted for under the 1948 Genocide Convention definition because they are political violations. In this regard, both the politicide and genocide definitions are flawed because they are narrow.

Newer definitions (which will continue to change across various scholars’ categorisations) include those offered by Drost,<sup>315</sup> Huttenbach,<sup>316</sup> as well as Chiro and McCauley,<sup>317</sup> who refer to political motivations as an integral part of a genocide and do not see it as a separate or a distinct issue – noting that the political, socio-economic, and the cultural are often intertwined. It does not seem possible to try to differentiate symbiotic or causal links in the way that Godwin does. Even if it is evident that Gukurahundi was primarily about the political, the other factors play a part in the whole occurrence.

As I conclude this section dedicated to understanding what Gukurahundi is (according to participants), I draw attention to Robert Mugabe’s retrospective explanation of everything, as it is interesting to hear other offerings. His explanation in this regard has remained consistent since the 1980s to the present.

In a long-awaited interview after Robert Mugabe’s military-assisted removal from power on 17 November 2017, the former president spoke to SABC on the 15 March 2018 in a live recording. In this interview, he highlighted the following sentiments about Gukurahundi:

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<sup>314</sup> Godwin, *The Fear*, 105.

<sup>315</sup> P. Drost, *The Crime of State. Vol I Humanicide. International Governmental Crime against Individual Human Rights* (358p.), Vol II Genocide. United Nations Legislation on International Crime Law (225p). Leyden, 1995.

<sup>316</sup> H. Huttenbach, “Locating the Holocaust on the Genocide Spectrum: Towards a Methodology of Definition and Categorization,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 3, no. 3 (1988).

<sup>317</sup> D. Chiro, and C. McCauley, *Why Not Kill Them All? The Logic and Prevention of Mass Murder* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006).

When you look at Gukurahundi and examine how it came about ... you blame again the Ndebeles ... you blame the party that led them – ZAPU; because they had brought in shipments of arms from the Soviet Union. I was called by Nyerere who said, “These shipments (received through Dar es Salaam Port) ... what are they for? You are now an independent country”. Nyerere said, “Talk to K.K [Kaunda]”. Kaunda said yes – they had given these arms to ZAPU. I said, “Why? It is not a government ... and the party [i.e. ZAPU] cannot receive shipments, bombs, etc. ... what will they do with it?”<sup>318</sup>

Robert Mugabe thereafter stated that these arms were then searched for and found hidden, with some of the arms already having been distributed. This, he asserted with emphasis, led to the actions which were later referred to formally as “Operation Gukurahundi”. Intriguingly, whilst the discovered arms caches are an oft-cited reason behind Gukurahundi by scholars, and pushed politically by ZANU–PF, they were only referred to by Toto Nkosi, Tshabalala, and Jabulani Mpande – out of myriad participants in the research.<sup>319</sup> Tshabalala and Jabulani Mpande, who fought in the liberation war, stated that they held senior ZAPU rank (I cannot specify which ranks these were – even as they were told to me – for the purpose of keeping their anonymity) and, along with Toto Nkosi, were quick to rubbish the arms cache story. Contrarily, these men believed that these hidden arms were a guise used conveniently to justify and wage a Gukurahundi war.

Jabulani Mpande’s version is that both ZANU and ZAPU during this time were in the process of disarming, even though this process was in the beginning stages, and it was happening at a slow pace. He asserts that as senior ZAPU officials, they had declared that after the war of independence they wanted to send their ammunition to support the ANC’s struggle for liberation in South Africa. Both Jabulani Mpande and Tshabalala insist that Mugabe had been made aware of this. Yet, when he needed to wage war against ZAPU and its supporters, he conveniently chose to use the story of these arms – as a pretence, to stop subterfuge – and pushed the idea that ZAPU was planning a military coup.<sup>320</sup>

Overall, Mugabe’s sentiments as shared on SABC led to quite an uproar on social media, with Ndebele-speaking persons (and specifically survivors) sharing their displeasure about these statements that blamed the “Ndebeles” and went further to hold them responsible for the violence

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<sup>318</sup> SABC Digital News. Robert Mugabe Speaks Out. March 15, 2018. Watched live. And [online accessed 29 Dec, 2018] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2f6akTpjIH0>

<sup>319</sup> Mr. Toto Nkosi (Toto), June 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa; Mr. Jabulani Mpande, August 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa; Mr. Tshabalala, April 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*

which was unfairly meted out to them. It was stated in Twitter wars that this explanation, along with the justification for Gukurahundi, was weak, and more of a denial than a truthful account of what happened. In this regard, scholars speak to the reality that the term Gukurahundi was not something that Mugabe thought of, and conceived as practice, at a whim post-independence, and specifically after receiving intelligence from Nyerere about arms shipments – as he would make it seem.

The phrase Gukurahundi, as is commonly used, is obtained from a longer phrase or rather a title of a booklet called *Gore re Gukurahundi* (the Year of the People's Storm). This booklet was written for, and released by, the ZANU-PF Department of Information in 1979, and represents the ideals incorporated by the party.<sup>321</sup> In this regard, Ndlovu-Gatsheni states: "while the strategy of Gukurahundi was openly embraced as party policy in 1979, it had a long history in ZANU beginning with the formation of ZANU in 1963. Its philosophy of confrontation entailed embracing violence as a legitimate political tool of fighting for independence and the destruction of opponents and enemies".<sup>322</sup><sup>323</sup> A widely referred to excerpt from the book, *Gore re Gukurahundi*, is detailed below:

[O]ur war has transformed into a people's war. Let us therefore demonstrate the people's force this year. Let the people's fury break into a revolutionary storm which will engulf and sweep the enemy completely from our land ... <sup>324</sup>

Considering this was written pre-independence, at the start of 1979, it is most likely that this message – then – was directed towards the Rhodesian Front, along with people Mugabe referred to as "settlers". However, its resurgence and reuse, not just as a term, but as the name of a specialised army carrying out "Operation Gukurahundi" in 1980, shows that it was now aimed at destroying a different type of opposition in the new Zimbabwe – i.e. ZAPU. This seems to link with the observations of participants in the study, who earlier in this chapter referred to Gukurahundi as being an administered plan.

Indeed, there are several other aspects which Mugabe's statements reveal. First, whether covertly or else overtly stated, it appears that former president Robert Mugabe buys into the Ndebele/Shona divisions. It is strange that he blamed the "Ndebeles" for the Gukurahundi

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<sup>321</sup> Ndebele, Zenzele. Gukurahundi: A moment of madness – 1982 to 1987.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5D2BJBFMuvk>

<sup>322</sup> Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "Rethinking 'Chimurenga' and 'Gukurahundi' in Zimbabwe: A Critique of Partisan National History," *African Studies Review: The Journal of the African Studies Association* 55, no. 3 (2012): 11–12.

<sup>323</sup> Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Sabelo. "Rethinking Chimurenga and Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe: A Critique of Partisan National History." *African Studies Review* 55, no. 3 (December 1, 2012): 11 - 12

<sup>324</sup> Ndebele, Zenzele. Gukurahundi: A moment of madness – 1982 to 1987.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5D2BJBFMuvk>

occurrence and verbalised it so. If the then president, Mugabe, himself treated – or treats – all Ndebele as homogenous, as shown through his statement, and was unable to differentiate Ndebele civilians from the handful of armed dissidents, it must not come as a surprise that the Gukurahundi army on the ground was also not concerned with making such a distinction. In 1983 Mugabe is reported by the CCJP as saying:

[W]here men and women provide food for dissidents, when we get there we eradicate them. We don't differentiate when we fight, because we can't tell who is the dissident, and who is not.<sup>325</sup>

It is for reasons such as these that many people attacked during Gukurahundi still tend to fixate the story on their cultural affiliation foremost, before they speak about the bigger political issues. In any case, both (i.e. political affiliation and nationhood) impact one another.

Second, in the 2018 SABC interview, we see that Mugabe thus continues to justify the need for the Gukurahundi army, and still does not assume responsibility. Blaming the “Ndebeles” is a type of contestation of memories around what happened (i.e. the memory wars surrounding Gukurahundi). This thinking and articulation it is a continuum of the various states of denial highlighted in chap. 5 of this thesis.

The next discussion speaks to the various actors implicit in the retelling of Gukurahundi.

## **4.6. Who Are the Various Actors Associated with Gukurahundi?**

### **4.6.1. Individuals in Leadership Positions**

There are often specific names of people mentioned by participants, as being responsible for the events of Gukurahundi. These include: former President Robert Mugabe, current President Emmerson Mnangagwa, as well as Colonel Perence Shiri. Despite Mnangagwa's new tenure as the president of Zimbabwe, he has struggled to endear himself and rid himself from association with the Gukurahundi atrocities. There are other names that also come up, such as Maurice Nyagumbo and Enos Nkala, who are remembered by participants as speaking about the creation of a Fifth Brigade on radio and TV as a precursor to the atrocity.<sup>326</sup> These names are associated with ZANU–PF's senior party leadership. In this regard, Zwelibanzi Malinga says:

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<sup>325</sup> Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and Legal Resources Foundation, *Breaking the Silence* (1997), 44.

<sup>326</sup> Enos Nkala (d.2013) was a Ndebele acculturated politician under ZANU (and was there at its formation in 1963, where he moved from ZAPU). He served in as Minister in several capacities, but he is most known for his tenure as Home Affairs and Defence Minister in 1985. In this role, more than the others, he has been accused of compliance in

I remember family members started praying that something would happen to Maurice Nyagumbo and Enos Nkala because they had appeared on TV the previous day saying they are going to send out the Fifth Brigade. I remember seeing this as a child. They were saying “the Fifth Brigade is going to crush you”.<sup>327</sup>

Incidentally, in several speeches given by Mugabe (including at the passing out ceremony of the Gukurahundi army in December 1982), he too often shared these strongly worded sentiments and rather blatantly said that Gukurahundi would “crush” dissidents.<sup>328</sup> I find that this word stands out – even for me – as part of the Gukurahundi memory I carry.

Additionally, names such as Joshua Nkomo, Lookout Masuku, and Dumiso Dabengwa of ZAPU also come up in the story of Gukurahundi, with the latter two senior ZAPU leaders associated with a four-year detainment during Gukurahundi – a move which was part of Mugabe’s bid to dismantle ZAPU leadership structures during the occurrence.

When participants draw attention to specific individuals where Gukurahundi is concerned, it brings to mind Eltringham’s argument that where individual persons are identifiable, such crimes ought to be dealt with or addressed not as a collective – as most states are wont to do – but at the individual level; in other words, justice reforms should hold specific persons or individuals to account.<sup>329</sup>

#### **4.6.2. Security Personnel (Fifth Brigade Soldiers)**

The memory of Gukurahundi is intertwined or associated with soldiers as the key face of the human rights violations. Mama ka Zonda notes:

The Gukurahundi soldiers would arrive in an area, and camp there. It was usually in a big clearing *egangeni* [in the bush]. They were many of them. Strangely, considering they were soldiers – we never saw them training. They just got to a place ... pitched tents and stayed there ... and did whatever they wanted. They went and came as they

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Gukurahundi, although he denies involvement. It has often been said though that at his death he often cited deep regret over the occurrences of Gukurahundi, and the impact it had.

Maurice Nyagumbo (d.1989) was a Zimbabwean politician who served in various capacities under several political formations in the history of Zimbabwe and South African. He was mostly commonly known to be a ZANU senior ranking official and served in different Ministries including Minister of Mines; Political Affairs and was a Senior Minister of State for Political Affairs. He died of suicide by rat poisoning following the Willowgate scandal where he was charged for perjury.

<sup>327</sup> Mr. Zwelibanzi Malinga, April 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>328</sup> Ndebele, Zenzele. Gukurahundi: A moment of madness – 1982 to 1987.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5D2BJBFMuvk>

<sup>329</sup> Nigel Eltringham, *Accounting for Horror Post-Genocide Debates in Rwanda* (Londres; Sterling, Va.: Pluto Press, 2004).

needed ... until their time in an area was over, and they had to move on to the next place/campsite.<sup>330</sup>

Participants highlighted several factors about these soldiers. Every participant stated very clearly that they were feared. MaMpofu asserts:

[W]e feared the soldiers more than we feared the dissidents [who lived in the bushes in hiding]. We believed that the soldiers are the ones that did the most harm during Gukurahundi, as they were better equipped for war.<sup>331</sup>

Of these soldiers, Jabulani Mpande notes:

[T]hey acted as a killer machine on auto pilot ... and neglected to protect citizens – even in their quest for “dissidents”. Senior commanders of the army were ex-freedom fighters ... and they should have been at the forefront of defending human life – but that was not the case.<sup>332</sup>

Participants noted that the Fifth Brigade soldiers seemed to be thriving socio-economically, amidst Gukurahundi’s hardship as experienced by survivors. Soldiers were comfortable, and provided for – in comparison to the families, communities, and detainees who experienced great lack and suffered as a result of the soldiers’ actions.

The soldiers were very strong as they used to eat very well. And they would eat in front of us. And we would be given whatever was left over, served on the lid of a bin. If you were slow to get to the food or to grab it, you would die of hunger.<sup>333</sup>

Mama ka Zonda observed:

[S]oldiers called on the villagers for water or firewood when their delivery trucks were late. But otherwise ... they seemed to have a steady stream of supplies.<sup>334</sup>

During the Gukurahundi curfews, food shortages were a common occurrence, and part of the torture strategy. It should not come as a surprise that under such circumstances participants remember well-fed soldiers. Brian Nyathi remembers a person from his village who out of hunger decided to kill one of his own livestock (a goat) and eat it. Considering such an action was not allowed under the food embargoes, he was killed by the army.<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> Katherine, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>331</sup> MaMpofu, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>332</sup> Mr. Jabulani Mpande, August 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

<sup>333</sup> Mr. Mthombeni, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>334</sup> Mama ka Zonda, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>335</sup> Mr. Brian Nyathi, November 2015. Interviewed in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Amidst all this food scarcity, it may have been one of the plans of the Fifth Brigade to ensure that the community was not feeding and supporting dissidents overall. Both dissidents and Fifth Brigade soldiers are recorded as occasionally requiring the community to cook for them, slaughter their livestock, and share their resources. I was not able to ascertain if there was duress during these encounters, or if this was done in conditions whereby these actors and their actions were endorsed by the community. For instance, it was not a strange occurrence for a girlfriend of a soldier to prepare food for him and others. Brian Nyathi's next door neighbour's wife was taken to go and live with the Fifth Brigade in this very capacity – as a girlfriend.<sup>336</sup> She returned after the army had moved station six months later.

Additionally, both Brian Nyathi and Toto Nkosi note that food supplies, which normally arrived for them in the rural areas by bus – from family members in Bulawayo – were infrequent during Gukurahundi, as many buses were burnt down and transport to these spaces was curtailed.<sup>337</sup> As such, food which had been consistently sourced and sent through was no longer available. In similar vein, MaMpofu details how the Fifth Brigade learnt early on to assemble people at the local grocery store under the guise that *mealie* meal was on sale and readily available. When people arrived there en masse to buy this staple, they were instead hit by the Gukurahundi army.<sup>338</sup> Lastly, still on food, Sis' Siphoshe says:

[W]hen we were living in the bush/wilderness for three months, hunger kicked in. "Where are we going to get food from?" We just ate whatever we found left in the fields. Watermelons, wild fruit, maize ... I remember clearly, all this happened during the time of the harvest of maize. In the end ... Thembeni passed away. I don't think he lasted a month from the time our mother had been burnt. He eventually died. He died because we couldn't look after the child. As a two- month old baby – he needed milk from his mother.<sup>339</sup>

Lastly, soldiers reminded their captives of the economic gains that they were receiving by doing Gukurahundi work. Mthombeni remembers a soldier boldly stating (as a means to torment them) that "since his posting in Tsholotsho, he had started building his home which he would complete shortly'. He announced publicly that 'we earn a lot of money doing this work'".<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> Mr. Brian Nyathi, November 2015. Interviewed in Johannesburg, South Africa.

<sup>337</sup> Mr. Brian Nyathi, November 2015. Interviewed in Johannesburg, South Africa.; Mr. Toto Nkosi (Toto), June 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

<sup>338</sup> MaMpofu, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>339</sup> Sis' Siphoshe, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>340</sup> Mr. Mthombeni, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.



As a result of all these factors highlighted above, participants tended to describe soldiers in several, ungenerous ways. I have penned below select notable phrases, which describe the collective sentiments that emanated and were echoed by participants in one form or the other:

“Soldiers were not people, they acted like animals. Even the way they drove was destructive”. (Rasta)

“Soldiers were always looking for dissidents. It seemed as if that was the only question they ever asked, or rather the phrase which they felt they needed to start with, and that would then be enough to justify them being cruel to us thereafter. I never ever heard them saying for instance that they had found a dissident. No. They were always looking for them”. (Gogo Thandeka)

“Soldiers were irrational”.<sup>341</sup> (Zwelibanzi Malinga)

“Soldiers would come and do ‘that’ talking as if they were angry with us, always shouting instructions. You found yourself working very hard to cool soldiers’ tempers and not aggravate them further. We simply had to do what they asked of us, even though sometimes it was unimaginable”. (Mama ka Zonda)

“Soldiers were very ugly. Even their uniforms were ugly. It was all ugly”. (MaMpofu)

The citations above describing soldiers who drive badly and are destructive, who are ugly, irrational, and are always angry continue the thread amongst participants who clearly want to reiterate that they despise soldiers. They describe them in uncharitable ways, because of the emotional vestiges and memories that they still have about them.

“The soldiers really seemed to like their jobs and were blood thirsty in their execution of it. They were killers. They killed anyone and everyone. Their work must have represented their overall beliefs and endorsement of Gukurahundi. Occasionally there were sympathetic soldiers amongst them who would caution the others to pull the brakes on the cruelty – but they were few and far between”. (Hlabangana)

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<sup>341</sup> Zwelibanzi shared a story to detail this irrationality. He states that he struggled because he used the surname Nkomo, which whilst a common enough surname became his Achilles’ heel because, according to the soldiers, it meant that he could by default be related to Joshua Nkomo, the leader of ZAPU – even when he was not. It meant more targeting and harassment even when he tried to tell them that the relational connection they were trying to make was a stretch.

In lieu of Hlabangana's views highlighted above, participants to the study were overall keen to reinforce binaries as they assert that Gukurahundi soldiers are not victims, but are clearly perpetrators, and should be treated as such. This assertion above asserts that soldiers endorsed the overall Gukurahundi rhetoric, enjoyed their work, and further – went as far as being efficient in their killing. Gukurahundi is not the only incidence of violence in Zimbabwe in which soldiers are normatively associated with being perpetrators. Sachikonye in his book *'When a State Turns on its Citizens'* provides ample evidence, through seven vignettes, detailing episodes of violence and terror based on his fieldwork experiences of 2010.<sup>342</sup> In all these vignettes, participants are clearly endorsing binaries which say that soldiers are perpetrators, and never victims.<sup>343</sup>

“Soldiers were lustful, and their appetites for women was unquenched. They were also known for being pitiless even in the way that they performed sexual acts – using needles, abusing primary school-aged going children who had not matured physically, and even requiring a son to sleep with his mother [as a means to humiliate them both]. A grandmother in my community opted to die, as she simply said that at her age – she would not be raped by these soldiers, and in front of everyone at that. She was killed”. (Gogo Thandeka)

In similar vein to other negative descriptions participants reinforce about soldiers, there is also the association with them being lustful, and using women's bodies to cause harm and fracture family settings. Throughout the thesis the reader will note, as I did, that sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) matters in the case of Gukurahundi are very much confined within the heteronormative lens, and are often spoken of by participants as being limited to the bodies of girls and women.

Whilst there is the common assumption that all the soldiers' identity was Shona, we see participants highlighting that other soldiers representing other nations were amongst the cohort (though few).

Some Ndebele soldiers were there when all this happened, with others as part of the Fifth Brigade itself. How else would the soldiers have been familiar with certain areas or where to go if they didn't have help from local soldiers.<sup>344</sup>

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<sup>342</sup> Lloyd Sachikonye, *'When a State Turns on Its Citizens : 60 Years of Institutionalised Violence in Zimbabwe'*, (Weaver Press, 2011), 50 and 52 – 57.

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>344</sup> Mr. Mthombeni, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

Amongst the soldiers, there was rank, and according to Mthombeni's observation, the higher the soldier was in rank, the more cruel or harsh he seemed to be.

We were told to go to a certain rock. And as we sat there, their boss came out. He was a big man [in two ways – i.e. physically large; as well as in the context of a soldier in very senior rank]. He was respected. And he had so many badges all over his uniform. He must have been the chief soldier or something. I remember the day clearly, as well as the man, but I never got to hear his name.<sup>345</sup>

Mthombeni asserts that he may not have heard the man's name or else, if it was mentioned, it might not have been his real name. Soldiers during this time (along with the guerrillas in the liberation period before it) were wont to use *nom de guerres*, to which they answered in the call of duty, beyond their familial names – possibly as a separation of the work that they did as soldiers, and the identities that they occupied outside of working hours. Participants Ngulube, Dungeni, and Themba Nkomo, along with Tshabalala – all former liberationists – seemed to highlight this practice and shared their alternative liberation names with me.<sup>346</sup>

Consistent with the CCJP assertions, participants corroborated that the Fifth Brigade soldiers were not the only security personnel who were present and are referred to throughout the Gukurahundi narrative.<sup>347</sup> There is evidence of an overwhelming military presence post-independence. Participants often referred to other soldiers and police being in the area during the time – and seem to overall have had a more positive experience with anyone that they did not consider to be a soldier of the Fifth Brigade. This is because the Gukurahundi army was answerable to no one, and remained autonomous and outside of the usual security structures. Admittedly, participants do state that they were not always sure who was what – although the red berets and other regalia stood out, along with the fact that the *modus operandi* of the Fifth Brigade seemed to have been very different. It was continually stated by participants that amongst the bevy of security personnel around them, the Fifth Brigade soldiers seemingly treated themselves as superior.

Gogo MaMoyo states that on the day that she was shot by three soldiers of the Gukurahundi army, her son ran out to look for soldiers from the Zimbabwe National Army, to help get her to the hospital.

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<sup>345</sup> Mr. Mthombeni, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>346</sup> Mr. Ngulube, May 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.; Mr. Dungeni, May 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.; Mr. Themba Nkomo, April 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.; Mr. Tshabalala, April 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>347</sup> Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and Legal Resources Foundation, *Breaking the Silence*. 1999.

The soldiers who helped me to the hospital were the real soldiers. They were from their camp or base which was well known to us. These other ones who shot me were a fake politicised army. On arrival to my home this army said to me “we come in the authority of the New and Only Government, and not who you people here believe are your leaders [i.e. ZAPU]. That era is over.”<sup>348</sup>

She notes that this statement was made with much emphasis.

Mama ka Zonda refers to the “other” soldiers who were not members of the Fifth Brigade as “the soldiers and the police who came with peace”. Admittedly, she speaks of these different armies and police as arriving at a later stage in the Gukurahundi process – in her mind, towards the end. She believes even after the soldiers had left, the police remained into 1986, monitoring peace.

I do not necessarily remember if they wore a different uniform to the Gukurahundi army, but the big difference was the way that they spoke to us, these soldiers. These soldiers came round about the same time with the police called Riot Police who stayed together with those soldiers ... We knew the police had come to protect us because they never used to harass us anymore saying bring firewood, water, sew for us, wash or clothes for us and so on.<sup>349</sup>

I turn attention to dissidents next.

#### **4.6.3. Dissidents**

I find the quote below by Toto Nkosi to be an interesting place to start in terms of defining who dissidents were. He says:

Dissidents were simply small armies. After independence, there shouldn't have been the presence of armed persons who were not in the national army – as all armed parties had been disarmed and disintegrated.<sup>350</sup>

As has been highlighted throughout the thesis, it was believed that these dissidents in question were estimated to be about 400 in total.<sup>351</sup> Whether Gukurahundi was a search in earnest for dissidents, or else simply a guise justifying the reasons behind the presence of the Fifth Brigade, and thus their torture towards civilians, remains inconclusive.

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<sup>348</sup> Gogo MaMoyo, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>349</sup> Mama ka Zonda, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>350</sup> Mr. Toto Nkosi (Toto), June 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

<sup>351</sup> Eppel, 2008 pg 3

Several participants highlight that in some instances, there was indeed a threat as dissidents themselves were quite dangerous and also feared.

We used to fear even the dissidents – because people with guns and living in the bush are frightening and are not to be trusted generally. They were some dissidents who were rough just for the sake of it, but they were generally not so bad ... and their presence was preferred as compared to that of the fifth brigade soldiers.<sup>352</sup>

To this end, Gogo MaMoyo is convinced that the whittling out of dissidents was just a facade. She asserts that “these Gayigusu” and Gwesela persons” – purportedly amongst some of Zimbabwe’s most wanted dissidents during this era – were being sought out “as government propaganda”, but did not really exist as she certainly never met any dissidents. Alternatively, she asserts that if they did exist, they were very much in cahoots with Mugabe, who through his ZANU-led government exacerbated dissident claims as a means to cause chaos in the area, and therefore justify the creation of the Gukurahundi army. Gogo MaMoyo finally concludes by stating that it really all was a bigger plan than was realised from the beginning.<sup>353</sup> Of interest to the reader is that journalists such as Raath know about these persons as having existed.<sup>354</sup> For instance, community members from Zhombe, Kwekwe, under Chief Gwesela acknowledged that notorious “dissident” Richard Gwesela was raised amongst them before he left to join ZIPRA – highlighting that he was not a figment of the imagination after all.<sup>355</sup>

Certainly, this type of “where are the dissidents” man-hunting was not a new tactic of then Prime Minister, Robert Mugabe, as the Rhodesian Front in their time (pre-Zimbabwe) used the same method to punish citizens. MaMpofu brings attention to this when she says:

[D]uring the liberation war we liked the ZPRA forces as they related well with us. *Babe ngama qhawe* [they were heroes]. The problem was that the then national army under Smith would interrogate and beat us harshly for relating to the ZPRA forces or guerrillas in the way that we did. They would arrive and ask us where the guerrillas were – even if we hadn’t seen them, they would just harass us saying we knew where they were.<sup>356</sup>

The Matabelelands and Midlands populace were later harassed and accused of harbouring dissidents and punished by Mugabe in the same way that they had been punished by Ian Smith.

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<sup>352</sup> MaMpofu, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>353</sup> Gogo MaMoyo, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>354</sup> Raath, Jan, “Bush hunt for slaughter gang.” *Times* [London, England], 1 Dec. 1987. *Academic OneFile*, <http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/> Accessed 1 Jan. 2019.

<sup>355</sup> S. Kawadza, “The curse of Gwesela” *The Herald* [Zimbabwe]. 13 Sept. 2013. [www.herald.co.zw](http://www.herald.co.zw) Accessed 29 Dec. 2018.

<sup>356</sup> MaMpofu, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

Many participants also highlighted their weariness of being asked these same questions all over again, as well as of still having to face this situation in the new Zimbabwe – when they thought liberation would have brought an end to it all. The majority of research participants stated that whatever answer one would have given in response to the query about the dissidents, it always led to torture. Jabulani Mpande put it aptly when he stated that if a person reported that they had indeed seen dissidents, they would be in trouble – because of the assumption that the community upon seeing them had thus offered them support. Alternatively, if a person reported that they had not seen a dissident, they would also be in trouble for purportedly withholding information about, or else opting to protect, “dissidents” whom the army always insisted had been there.<sup>357</sup> Essentially, the search by the Gukurahundi army always took the form of a question, but an answer was not necessarily the end goal, as one could never give the desired answer. Toto Nkosi highlights:

You would be told by the Gukurahundi army that “dissidents were seen around these parts”. Rural people were simply confused towards the end, about what was true, and what was not. People knew that there was no place for armed dissidents in Zimbabwe and therefore that these people shouldn’t have been there – yet there were.<sup>358</sup>

Throughout the study, there were altogether mixed sentiments about dissidents amongst the participants – while some of them claimed dissidents did not exist, others were making a different point about those who were officially labelled dissidents. This is to be expected, especially as the interviewees represented participants across a diverse geography and each brought variant experiences to the fore. Participants such as MaMpofu highlighted that they came across dissidents on very rare occasions, and that when they did, they did not know them, as the dissidents did not come from their community. Whereas participants such as MaNcube, who incidentally in this case was in the same community as MaMpofu during Gukurahundi, noted:

[S]ome of the dissidents we knew. People within the community could even name them. They were from amongst us, with some being our relatives or else our neighbours. They were *obhudi* who had left to go to the guerrilla warfare in the past. They thought with independence their lives would be easy and peaceful ... but that was not the case as they found themselves being labelled as insubordinate in the new Zimbabwe. It was not what they expected. They found themselves living difficult lives in the bush and persecuted in the process.<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>357</sup> Mr. Jabulani Mpande, August 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

<sup>358</sup> Mr. Toto Nkosi (Toto), June 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

<sup>359</sup> MaNcube, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

The difference between MaMpofu and MaNcube's accounts possibly lies in the reality that MaMpofu literally only arrived into this community at the onset of Gukurahundi as a new bride and thus was unfamiliar with the people; whereas MaNcube had lived there for a longer time and therefore in her opinion knew dissidents well in such a way that she could name them – if they were from the area.

Almost all participants noted that the word “dissident”, whilst commonly used by both government and civilians, had a negative connotation. The term dissident specifically is used by almost all survivors, as it was popularised terminology used by the state – and seems to have held currency. Even as I conducted the interviews, I could hear a clear distinction being made: through the narratives, when sharing about the liberation war, participants referred to guerrillas as *obhudi* (our brothers); yet when the survivors spoke about Gukurahundi, their use of the word *obhudi* ceased and “dissidents” became the terminology. Almost everyone made this switch subconsciously. However, there is a possibility that the term “dissidents” and the sentiments around them, as described by the state, may have had very different connotations, to what participants of the research associated with being a dissident. Overall, liberators who form part of the study, such as Themba Nkomo, believe that it is an appalling name to be called by, considering these same “dissidents” sacrificed their lives for the freedom of the masses as guerrillas at liberation. In that regard, he notes:

[D]issidents sometimes would actually be supported. You must also understand that people also understood that ZPRAs had been victimized. Sometimes dissidents played on this Matabeleland victim mentality which was prevalent ... i.e. we went to war; we lost lives; ZIPRA farms were taken, etc. ...<sup>360</sup>

As such, MaNcube continued to say:

[D]issidents did not want to be called that [i.e. dissidents]. They wanted to be taken good care of by the community and still be referred to as *obhudi*. We as a community now thought they were *abahlamuli* [i.e. deserters].<sup>361</sup>

I suspect they were called *abahlamuli* possibly for two variant reasons. First, *abahlamuli* includes the group of ZIPRAs who were absorbed into the newly integrated Zimbabwe National Army post-independence, who deserted from the army citing persecution based on lines of political affiliation.<sup>362</sup> Alternatively, the rhetoric could have been that they had deserted from ZAPU ethos and discipline, as Joshua Nkomo himself stated that he condemned dissidents and their

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<sup>360</sup> Mr. Themba Nkomo, April 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>361</sup> MaNcube, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>362</sup> Zenzele Ndebele – live testimony from a cadre in a similar position. Ndebele, Zenzele. Gukurahundi: A moment of madness – 1982 to 1987. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5D2BJBFMuyk>

behaviour. He noted that these “dissident” elements were not a part of ZAPU because of such violent unsanctioned actions.<sup>363</sup>

To this effect, Toto Nkosi sings a song in his interview, which the then Light Machine Gun (LMG) choir – which sang most of ZIPRA’s liberation songs – wrote and popularised after independence. The song is specifically anti-dissident. He says such songs from the LMG choir could be heard occasionally on Mthwakazi Radio before the station and a whole lot of other ZAPU-related stuff “disappeared”. He bemoaned that these songs are not heard anymore. Toto Nkosi sings:

*Zikhuzeni lezi zigangi bafowethu – zihlaselelani kanti izinkamba zamapholisa esizwe.*

According to Toto Nkosi, a fuller translation of the song, over and above the sentence above, goes like this, in his own words:

[R]eprimand these dissidents ... because these people and their actions are giving Mugabe an excuse to abuse and make the rest of us suffer...i.e. *asihlukumeze*. Don’t give them a reason.<sup>364</sup>

Toto noted that in the song the dissident is clearly defined as *lezi izigangi*, i.e. as “troublesome persons” or “delinquent elements”.

While participants such as Mama ka Zonda assert that they did not know these dissidents, and believed that they did not hail from within the community, but from further afar, she also notes that they were definitely identifiable in terms of the way they dressed, along with the guns they carried.

They did not go anywhere without guns. They usually wore clothes, sometime ragged, with many pockets and therefore much storage for the several things they carried on their persons. Even as they were not necessarily dressed in the ZIPRA liberation army regalia – they dressed in a certain way which made it easy for us to tell they were dissidents.<sup>365</sup>

She further goes on to say that the dissidents never harassed them. It was the soldiers who did – especially when they suspected that the community had seen and/or helped dissidents. Across a spectrum of participants, it appears that dissidents no longer had support in the communities. Additionally, dissidents were seen as renegade groups who had clearly been disclaimed by ZAPU structures.<sup>366</sup>

These dissidents no longer had support hence they forced people to cook for them but the people were tired of it. It was after the war of independence and they had all

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<sup>363</sup> Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and Legal Resources Foundation, *Breaking the Silence*, 1999.

<sup>364</sup> Mr. Toto Nkosi (Toto), June 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

<sup>365</sup> MaNcube, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>366</sup> Eppel, “Matabeleland”, 3.



been recalled. So we didn't understand what they still wanted from us. They definitely still had *izikhali* [arms], but they had no support from the people.<sup>367</sup>

Eppel states:

[D]issidents themselves admitted they were leaderless and were not taking instructions from any senior ZAPU official. In their own words, "Apart from defending ourselves, there was very little we wanted to achieve".<sup>368</sup>

As the plot continues to thicken, there are a significant number of participants, including Gogo Thandeka and Dungeni, amongst others, who assert that the Fifth Brigade were soldiers by day, but by night dressed up as dissidents and did "dissident-like things", so that it would be said that guerrillas had been seen in the community. Themba Nkomo says:

[B]ut we knew who the dissidents were. They were the Gukurahundi army. If they asked you the next day if you had seen the dissidents, they usually had been in the guise of dissidents themselves. If you said yes ... we saw the dissidents, it was you [i.e. soldiers] they would kill you for pointing them out as the dissidents. If you said you did not see any dissidents [i.e. referring to them], they could torture or kill you for simply not paying enough attention nor being on the lookout for the stated dissidents.<sup>369</sup>

Seminal reports on Gukurahundi, such as the CCJP document, as well as Stiff speak to the idea that sometimes Gukurahundi soldiers were dissidents. There is also the idea that over and above defected ZIPRA cadres and the Fifth Brigade being the dissidents, there was a third actor supported by South Africa's National Party, which – with the aim of creating chaos and destabilising Zimbabwe – had a brand of its own dissidents called Super ZAPU.<sup>370</sup> South Africa is recorded as having recruited individuals for sabotage duties or who acted as double agents in a way which further exacerbated distrust and dislike between ZANU and ZAPU – with all this seemingly achieved through the use of misinformation, the destruction of properties, etc.<sup>371</sup> Throughout the research process, no participant ever referred to this other actor in any meaningful way. Themba Nkomo went as far as suggesting that Super ZAPU could be a myth – where South Africa's power over Zimbabwe through Gukurahundi is believed to be overstated.

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<sup>367</sup> Mama ka Zonda, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>368</sup> Mama ka Zonda, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>369</sup> Mr. Themba Nkomo, April 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>370</sup> Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, *Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe*, 29.

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*

Of interest to the reader is that beyond those participants who met or saw dissidents, there was an equally significant number of participants who stated to the contrary that they never met any dissidents at all and simply only ever heard that they had been present.

Amongst the select actors highlighted in this chapter, Gukurahundi ultimately affected ordinary citizenry and civilians the most, especially as the Fifth Brigade took the war to ordinary people's spaces, such as to their homes, schools, hospitals, and churches – thus making it an occurrence which would affect the common man in the process. There are a variety of other actors/institutions that Gukurahundi has bearing on, who have not been mentioned sufficiently, as they begin to fall outside the parameters of this research study. These could include actors such as civil society, scholars, policy institutions, and advocates. It can be argued that the private sector and the white farming community are missing pieces of the Gukurahundi puzzle, as they generally have not been vocal about the violations that occurred. The farmers are particularly in a position to have witnessed and experienced Gukurahundi when it played out within the farms in the rural areas and amongst their staff members.

#### **4.7. The Impact of Gukurahundi (As Understood by the Survivors)**

There are many consequences of Gukurahundi. Some happened immediately during the atrocity (1982–1987), others in the short-term aftermath, while many others are longer term consequences and thus remain ongoing today. Indeed, many of these impacts are inter-connected and work symbiotically. The impact of Gukurahundi is experienced directly in most cases, and additionally affects other stakeholders, such as the next generation, indirectly.

The most evident magnitude of Gukurahundi was the commonality of death, torture, disappearances, and displacements which continued to abound. In speaking about disappearances, Gogo Thandeka states:

[A]s we speak, we have relatives that disappeared and till today we do not know what happened to them.<sup>372</sup>

Zwelibanzi shares a similar experience:

At the height of Gukurahundi, a large number of relatives moved to our house from Kezi. I remember I walked in on the family elders soon after they had arrived. They were reporting to my father and speaking specifically about Mthokozisi.<sup>373</sup>

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<sup>372</sup> Gogo Thandeka, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>373</sup> Mthokozisi is a pseudonym to protect the identity of the storyteller.

Mthokozisi was an uncle of mine – my father’s younger sibling. They were saying he was collected by the soldiers whilst at home. No one knew where he was. He was missing. We never found him.<sup>374</sup>

Zwelibanzi believes:

[M]ore people were killed during Gukurahundi than during the armed struggle. This is a shocking statistic considering it was supposed to be peace time for the country, post the Zimbabwean War of Liberation, in independence ... and more people are killed!!! ... unarmed people were killed within like the first 2 years or so.<sup>375</sup>

Whilst Zwelibanzi’s statistic is not entirely true, it carries emotional weight, as it shows that death became a commonality and was a lived reality for many – with great losses experienced. I am by no means corroborating Zwelibanzi’s conventional wisdom and felt reality against secondary academic literature, but of interest, as similarly noted by Eppel, is that

if we assume a number of 30,000 dead nationally over a decade of struggle in the 1970s, and consider an estimated 20,000 dead in an area representing 20% of the national population in the space of 30 months, the comparative intensity of the conflict becomes clear.<sup>376</sup>

Research participant Rasta who lives in South Africa observed the following:

[I]f you see people in Jo’burg (originally from Zimbabwe) being a part of dangerous gangs or thugs ... as they are wanton to be – don’t be surprised. Those people have seen death, and they no longer fear it, nor respect the dead. In the past, when a person died, there would be respect about it in the community. Now, you see people sitting on a gravesite and having a *lekker* conversation ... Young children exposed to death from a very early age ... Gukurahundi did this.<sup>377</sup>

Seemingly the geographical space too was littered with the residue of death and its pungency. Sis’ Sipho states that when schools resumed after a while in the 1980s, there remained evidence that teachers had been killed there.

Some of the teachers had even been thrown into the toilets in the school. They died inside there. Others had been killed, and their bodies were still left scattered there on the ground. In the rural areas today, people’s bones are still all over the land,

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<sup>374</sup> Mr. Zwelibanzi Malinga, April 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>375</sup> Mr. Zwelibanzi Malinga, April 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>376</sup> Eppel, “Matabeleland”, 1. See footnote 1.

<sup>377</sup> Mr. Rasta, November 2015. Interviewed in Johannesburg, South Africa.

resurfacing occasionally. When you see these bones, you are always wondering if they are the bones of your parents, family members or someone else.<sup>378</sup>

Participants noted that there are many more casualties of Gukurahundi than the number of dead recorded – many died after the Gukurahundi occurrence, while survivors (along with soldiers burdened by war in some instances) could not live long fulfilling lives thereafter. They died due to sustained injuries, emotional trauma, as well as mental health complications over time. I have not found any real statistics to buttress this reality as these numbers tend to be under-recorded, and it is an under-researched area overall.<sup>379</sup> It is usually very difficult to measure or historically trace the “unresolved and untreatable” aspects – psychological and material – after mass violence as it continues to have a bearing on people’s lives. From what was highlighted, there is a “possibility” that survival after Gukurahundi was more difficult. In speaking about these emotional vestiges, Gogo Thandeka says “indeed amongst us there are some that are crazy [mentally]”. In chorus, MaNcube details a story about her uncle (a headmaster from her community accused of funding dissidents from his vocation), who was tortured by the Gukurahundi army and escaped. He became very mentally unstable, to the extent that from 1985 until his death in 2016, he remained indoors, eternally in hiding in the peripheries of his home. He was always sick, became scared of people, and even became fearful of being in sunlight. He was never able to teach again. Sadly, the word used to describe many people affected in this way is “crazy/inhlanya”, which has negative connotations.

Hollander and Gill, in their paper on Uganda entitled “Everyday the War Continues in my body”, speak about the body marked through pain, disability and loss of mobility, long after an atrocity happens.<sup>380</sup> Several consequences come of this, such as an inability to be productive, particularly as people with thus marked bodies often struggle to conform to, or fulfil, compulsory gendered performances to expectation and often are stigmatised or discriminated against.<sup>381</sup> Mthombeni says:

[T]he worst thing they did was to torture people by beating them under their feet. You are not able to stand after that. And more significantly, that type of torture injures people in larger ways. That is why we see today, so many people that suffer from kidney failure.<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>378</sup> Sis’ Siphos, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>379</sup> Incidentally, it was not allowed in the early 1980’s to have people I recorded as having died from Gukurahundi complications – but other more general causes such as natural death, cancer etc. would a

<sup>380</sup> Theo Hollander and Bani Gill, “Every Day the War Continues in My Body: Examining the Marked Body in Postconflict Northern Uganda,” *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 8, no. 2 (July 1, 2014), 217.

<sup>381</sup> *ibid*

<sup>382</sup> Mr. Mthombeni, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

I am not sure if there is a medical link between being tortured under the feet and kidney failure specifically. Mthombeni, however, is convinced of this.

Other commonly cited health complications attributed to this atrocity by participants include high blood pressure, heart problems, and other internal wounds of different natures, including MaMpofu's struggle with reproductive health due to past beatings and rape/sexual violation during her pregnancy. Her husband Mthombeni reiterates:

[M]y wife and I always wanted a large family, but we had to forego that wish, after it became evident that my wife's pregnancies were dangerous and complicated. We were both sterilized at the advice of the doctor.<sup>383</sup>

Additionally, MaMpofu's son was born with a damaged hand, and the scar is still prominent today. Mthombeni battles excessive headaches attributed to being hit in the head severely. He has scars from stab wounds to the head, and a sunken fontanelle. "It is very dangerous. I feel like I suffered some kind of brain damage stemming from that occasion".<sup>384</sup> In my experience of Mthombeni, I incidentally noticed that he was slow in movement and spoke with a slight slur.

Gogo MaMoyo is physically disabled due to two bullets fired at her. She needs a caregiver (in this case her sister) who permanently

lifts me up so I can be on my wheel chair. I used to be a very big built woman in the past ... so moving me was difficult for my little sister. She has to do it though – so that I am clean. She washes me, cleans my room ... changes the sheets, etc. Sometimes when she is away, my 40-year-old son unfortunately has to do it. It is uncomfortable for both of us.<sup>385</sup>

As a vendor, who is wheelchair-bound Gogo MaMoyo states:

My biggest problem with Gukurahundi is that I have difficulties. I am unable to work. I can only go sell my wares on the street past 5pm in the evening, and under the trees because I will be avoiding the sun. It seems to affect me quite badly. But when I do get there ... God's good people try to support me by buying stuff from me. I sit there from 5pm to 10pm at night.<sup>386</sup>

In the past, Gogo MaMoyo was a subsistence farmer, but can no longer do that work, nor live in her rural home, in which she invested in her youth, as it is not suited for a wheelchair-bound

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<sup>383</sup> Mr. Mthombeni, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>384</sup> Mr. Mthombeni, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>385</sup> Gogo MaMoyo, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>386</sup> Gogo MaMoyo, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

person who needs medical care which cannot be received in Lupane. She also noted that people deride her because of her disability. So she now lives permanently in town.

These perpetual complications have resulted in a sizeable number of participants not being able to hold down any meaningful work due to constant pain, for example. In the rural areas where the economic livelihood is farming in the fields and livestock-rearing, participants noted that this heavy work is untenable when one has physical impediments. Additionally, constant visits to the hospital for lifelong ailment check-ups mean that time and energy which could be otherwise used more productively, is spent in hospital queues. Mthombeni's experiences mirror this reality:

I am now a person who is always in hospital. My health and my life has never been the same. I have pains. I have internal injuries and severe head wounds. I am unable to work as productively as I should and this is difficult for me – because I have always been an ambitious person who sets targets. My hospital books are always running out of pages, and I am often starting a new book, knowing that with time it too will fill up.<sup>387</sup>

Many of the women interviewed noted that they lived with sexually-transmitted diseases after sexual violation. MaNcube says:

My eldest sister who was aged 20 at the time was raped, fell pregnant and had a child as a result of it. It appears that one of the people who raped her *wayengaphilanga* [i.e. was sick]. It's just that at the time these things were not known. She has since died. And the child also died. When we considered this in greater detail we realized that it was a case of HIV infection. The child never reached the age of five years. From the time the baby was born – sickness abounded. The baby was never strong. It was strange to us at the time, because we didn't understand.<sup>388</sup>

Very rarely do people use the acronym HIV/AIDS. Often when locals speak about it, along with other STDs, they use the phrase which MaNcube used – *wayengaphilanga*, meaning he was sick/infected – and by conjecture people know exactly what is spoken of. Gogo Thandeka says:

[I]t cannot be doubted that some of these soldiers carried venereal diseases [i.e. sexually transmitted diseases]. If you even think about it ... when did we begin to hear about this HIV/AIDS being effective? It was these 1984/1985 times. Almost as if the

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<sup>387</sup> Mr. Mthombeni, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>388</sup> MaNcube, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

soldiers had been given an injection to say ... whenever you meet women where you are going ... spread this disease there, so that it can be abundant there too.<sup>389</sup>

In light of this, Gogo Thandeka had to eventually undergo rigorous treatment for syphilis, through the help of a relative who eventually took her to a hospital in Harare after the human rights violations had ended. Many others were not able to access similar opportunities, due to several constraints.

Clinics and doctors were no longer available in this time – especially for girls and women who had been abused and hurt. That had all been shut down a long time ago. And if you attempted to go far off to the few functioning hospitals [which by now were far] ... you could have bad luck and bump into the Fifth Brigade as you journeyed, and they would ask you “where are you going”.<sup>390</sup>

Whilst sexually-transmitted diseases and other venereal diseases such as syphilis existed in this time, this Gukurahundi period of the mid-1980s in actuality represents the era when the first few cases of HIV/AIDS were identified in the country. Reference to this new epidemic at the time, and juxtaposing HIV/AIDS as part of Gukurahundi memory, may or else may not literally be true. In cases where it is not true, it may be indicative of collaborative memories where the teller of the story organises the context of HIV/AIDS and makes it an integral part of their Gukurahundi memory. This idea of synchronized or colluded memories (in line with the socio-economic and political context) was discussed earlier in chap. 3, with reference to the work of authors such as Hatzfield and Garuba.

Had there been greater access to basic services and amenities (assuming that these services were effective and capable of treating survivors), as well as freedom of movement during Gukurahundi, some of these medical needs could have been addressed sooner. Numerous schools and clinics/hospitals, for instance, were shut down during Gukurahundi, especially when key staffing personnel had been killed, disappeared, or fled for safety. It meant that people could not access much-needed healthcare at the time, resulting in injuries being left untreated. Moreover, this meant that there was additional strain on the few functioning clinics/hospitals which remained open, when others had shut down, resulting in these establishments being filled to capacity and under-resourced. They were also far, and one risked travelling to these establishments amidst curfews. Gogo MaMoyo highlights that because of Gukurahundi, it took two weeks to move her from St Luke’s Hospital (Lupane) to Mpilo Hospital (Bulawayo) at the time she had been shot – as

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<sup>389</sup> Gogo Thandeka, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>390</sup> Gogo Thandeka, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

the hospital feared that their vehicles would be seized and burnt during the journey by the Fifth Brigade and that they would be tortured.

On arrival at Mpilo hospital in Bulawayo, they dragged out an additional two weeks looking for blood that matched mine. They had run out of blood supplies because they were dealing with an influx of such cases. My eventual six-month tenure there coincided with an overturned train accident in Hwange – and as a result there was just no space in the hospital.<sup>391</sup>

Another impact of Gukurahundi is that issues of memory, trauma, and fear are enhanced. Chap. 5 dedicates attention and time specifically to issues of memory. Therefore, I will only share brief examples at this point. Participants overall insisted that any soldier in uniform is a site of memory for them. The following quote by MaMpofu aptly highlights this, when she says:

I don't even want to see soldiers, especially that uniform. It brings back the old memories. But I have no choice. Soldiers will always be around, and I just have to know that I can't wish them away.<sup>392</sup>

Indeed, survivors live with triggers around them lending themselves to memory recall, and this is an ongoing and ever-present impact of Gukurahundi.

The violence that survivors experienced during Gukurahundi (directly and indirectly) is also worth noting as it has recurrent post-traumatic effects. The worst consequence of this is that there seemingly are never any channels through which this trauma is addressed or dealt with. Jonah developed behavioural problems, which, whilst existent in his difficult childhood, seemed to have greatly intensified in the aftermath of Gukurahundi and eventually landed him in trouble with the law in the long run. After Gukurahundi, Jonah returned to high school to pick up where his schooling had left off before Gukurahundi. He narrates how he “performed” his trauma – even as he did not realise, or at least acknowledge, that he was traumatised at the time or else was grappling with difficult emotions.

Incidentally, there are very few words in the language of Ndebele which adequately describe many psycho-social and mental conditions such as trauma and/or depression. Instead, phrases like “(s)he has demons”, “her craziness has started again”, and “(s)he is looking for attention” remain in existence amidst very serious conditions. The lack of local lexicon (or else if these words exist), the fact that people do not use them possibly makes it an unrepresentable reality. Jonah shares the following about his “rebellion” in the aftermath of Gukurahundi:

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<sup>391</sup> Gogo MaMoyo, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>392</sup> MaMpofu, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.



I was stubborn and a bully at school. I had arguments with teachers ... There was a project where they [the government?] were grading the road in our area. Therefore a caterpillar [a building vehicle] had been left parked at our school. I burst the tyres with a knife. I refused to be punished by the headmaster for that and instead preferred to go home suspended. I no longer wanted school and I never went back again.<sup>393</sup>

Seemingly, Jonah, through his behaviour, was reacting to deep-seated trauma and grappling with emotional vestiges. Participants such as Hlabangana and Sis' Siphio battled with violence, anger, and bitterness after Gukurahundi – which they claim they did not necessarily have before the occurrence.<sup>394</sup> Naturally, it is difficult to verify such assertions. Hlabangana details that after Gukurahundi, he was consumed with a quest for revenge for years, although it became futile as he never knew who to direct this revenge towards, and an opportunity never presented itself for him to take revenge.

In the past, as a younger man, I always had the mind-set that I wanted to revenge on this government, through certain acts, for the pain and suffering that they had caused me. I used to ask myself 'what can do to also make them feel the way they made me feel?' You think of revenge because you are broken on the inside. But I saw that that it is not helpful ... Who can I revenge? How?"<sup>395</sup>

Jonah struggled to hold down stable employment because his Gukurahundi "demons" would emerge. He was difficult to have as an employee – constantly argumentative and fighting. This resulted in him being involved in an altercation that led to him being arrested and jailed for three years – even as he asserts that he was wrongly accused. Naturally, this spilled over into his family life, with the result that Jonah's violence and the eventual arrest estranged him from his wife and children. She left him.<sup>396</sup>

Rasta asserts that he is not consumed by the emotional vestiges of anger any more. It is rather for him the manifestation of deep-seated emotional pain that envelopes him.

You find that over the years. You don't remain angry? It's not anger that I feel all these years. It is an unbelievable pain. It's a pain which never goes away. It breaks you ...<sup>397</sup>

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<sup>393</sup> Mr. Jonah Dube, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>394</sup> Mr. Hlabangana, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.; Sis' Siphio, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>395</sup> Mr. Hlabangana, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>396</sup> Mr. Jonah Dube, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>397</sup> Mr. Rasta, November 2015. Interviewed in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Another explicitly stated consequence of Gukurahundi are the children born from sexual violation, and usually whose fathers are unknown, as it impacts notions of family or community life. Furthermore, there are identity issues, or issues of belonging for these children, when the circumstances behind their births are known/unknown.

There was more than one father for our children. The soldiers constantly changed the girls in my primary school. It could have been anyone's child, and I could not change that reality. There was no love in these interactions. We were school going kids and the soldiers would detain us. They forced us to go with them instead.<sup>398</sup>

The mothers of these babies were themselves usually children of school-going age. Mama ka Zonda notes:

[W]hen my baby was young ... I used to play with him. Sometimes when I looked at him ... I just had those flashbacks and would cry. I just thought "how am I going to take care of this child whom I have been burdened with when I am at such a tender age myself".<sup>399</sup>

The impact of this violation became more complicated not just for the individual; it also adversely impacted marriages. Gogo Thandeka notes that it was a difficult time during the pregnancy. She had confided in her husband about the incidents of rape, and he immediately abandoned the marriage, along with the two already existing children he had with her, asserting that "he was not willing to raise another man's child".<sup>400</sup> Gogo Thandeka thus struggled to raise her daughter and the other children alone, often having to deprive them of opportunities as she did not have help or support. A by-product of Gukurahundi is that it creates or enhances cycles of intergenerational poverty.

I got disrupted in my life and I have no legacy to give my children because of that. The legacy of your child is their future. I haven't even been able to give my children that, because my own future was taken from me. I wrote only one paper of the form two exams. Gukurahundi appeared and we could not sit the rest of our exams. Once an exam day passes – it passes. You don't get the chance again. Your life becomes forever constrained.<sup>401</sup>

Sis' Sipho was also constrained or lacked opportunities to exist and thrive, as she had no paperwork. While Gogo Thandeka felt she needed educational certificates or qualifications in order to create a better legacy for her children, Sis' Sipho was fighting for an existence as a

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<sup>398</sup> Mama ka Zonda, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>399</sup> Mama ka Zonda, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>400</sup> Gogo Thandeka, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>401</sup> Gogo Thandeka, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwean. She did not have a birth certificate (as it was burnt in the hut along with her parents) and thus struggled to attain other key paperwork such as an identity document or a passport. By age 21, she still had nothing.<sup>402</sup>

Other participants in the study stated, contrary to Gogo Thandeka, that they chose not to disclose SGBV at the hands of soldiers, to their partners or family for the very reason that they would be abandoned by the community, which stigmatises and discriminates against women who have been sexually violated. Mama ka Zonda vehemently asserts:

No, I will never tell my husband. I have pretended that this child [Zonda] belongs to him because I know he will leave me. It happened to so many other women from here. In cases where we [women] married after these children had been born, we said the child belonged to a boyfriend from a former relationship. For some reason society could handle this more than they could rape.<sup>403</sup>

Seemingly, this version of events is more palatable than rape is. Academics such as Durbach note how in South Africa, at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), many people preferred not to talk about their rape ordeal(s) – largely because of the stigma and re-traumatisation to which it exposed them and their families thereafter.<sup>404</sup> Gukurahundi has thus necessitated secrets which people have had to live with.

These secrets and other divisive occurrences resulted in distrust in communities amongst families and neighbours.<sup>405</sup> Through Gukurahundi, relatives turned on each other. Family members were forced to spy on each other and report to the army, or else to dissidents, about goings-on. I use several examples here to evince this point. Interviewee Mthombeni states that his nephew was instructed to hit him – a very divisive move.

Suddenly, I saw Hlabangana. He is my relative. He was a schoolboy at the time. The soldiers instructed him, and his friend to beat me thoroughly. They did. They had no choice. The soldiers didn't care that we were relatives. They just said hit each other.<sup>406</sup>

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<sup>402</sup> Sis' Sipho, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>403</sup> Mama ka Zonda, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>404</sup> Andrea Durbach, "Towards Reparative Transformation: "Revisiting the Impact of Violence against Women in a Post-TRC South Africa", *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 10, 3(2016).

<sup>405</sup> Eppel, "Healing the Bones".

<sup>406</sup> Dube (Senior), April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

Brian Nyathi says:

[T]he first person I saw who was killed by this Gukurahundi army is this guy in my village ... I think he had stolen a goat ... killed it ... and possibly eaten it out of hunger – but people reported him, as people used to tell on each other to the Gukurahundi army at this time. It was not ascertained whether he was reported more for his act of theft purposely, or for other reasons ...<sup>407</sup>

MaNcube remembers:

There are some women in an area close to here where we are whose mouths, ears and noses were cut, by the dissidents because they had released information to fifth brigade soldiers about community members who were sympathetic to dissidents and had cooked for them. If indeed these women survived this cruelty, and are alive, they are a sight to see.<sup>408</sup>

Mthombeni asserts that his return from Bhalagwe was difficult as

many community members had questions – which they couldn't quite ask me and which I wouldn't have been able to answer. For example, people had anxieties about their family members who had gone to the same place I had gone... and never returned. They may have wanted to know where they were? what happened to them? and more importantly, how did I come back when their relatives didn't? This is not the kind of information anyone wants to be accountable for. I revealed limited information and gave generalised knowledge – even when I sometimes knew what happened to their relatives.<sup>409</sup>

Hlabangana admits withholding key information about people's deaths and where their bodies can be found in the community.

[P]eople in the community till today, can sometimes confide in you... speaking about never having buried their family members as they do not know where they died. I was an errand boy of the Gukurahundi Army. I knew and saw what was going on...and had access to information about select villagers whereabouts. Sometimes I was sent to go and bury the bodies of these people. Remember, I grew up in this very same

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<sup>407</sup> Mr. Brian Nyathi, November 2015. Interviewed in Johannesburg, South Africa.

<sup>408</sup> MaNcube, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>409</sup> Mr. Mthombeni, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

community – so I knew people well. Many of the deceased were buried in just one grave. But I was scared to say I knew to their families.<sup>410</sup>

These forms of fear create silences and secrecies as a way of coping and carrying on with one's life.

An additional consequence of Gukurahundi, over and above the harm caused to persons and the adverse impact on their access to key services, is the destruction of properties and assets. Mthimkhulu narrates the following:

[F]or instance, there were unique Chinese army trucks which the Fifth Brigade drove through these areas. Seemingly these vehicles had no brakes, because whatever was in the way, i.e. cows and donkeys on the road ... they drove into them [or over them]. They would run over animals by the road and leave them dead. Strangely, they never stopped to collect this as meat to eat. That is why I personally think there was a deliberateness in wanting to destroy and ruin all property.<sup>411</sup>

Indeed, many homes were burnt to oblivion, and this is another example of property being destroyed. Brian Nyathi says he remembered the most the burning of buses.

I did not use a bus to get to school. I walked. But I was affected when buses were burnt down as the lack of a bus affected my access to sustenance and my family. You know... my mother lived and worked in town [Bulawayo] ... so she used to send through provisions on the bus. Further, she came home in those buses every fortnight. During Gukurahundi she could not come. It was too risky.<sup>412</sup>

Homes and fields were razed to the ground, such as Sis' Siphio and Gogo MaMoyo's family homes.

Gukurahundi has left the citizenry, mainly from Matabeleland and Midlands, with unresolved feelings. They are increasingly disengaged from socio-economic and political affairs in the country. Toto Nkosi asserts:

I actually boycotted the 1985 elections because of Gukurahundi on-goings [*sic*]. I have never voted in Zimbabwe. Many Bulawayo people just don't bother to vote ... and especially not for ZANU.<sup>413</sup>

There is evidence from participants such as Toto Nkosi of citizenry apathy when it comes to political matters, as a result of feeling and believing that the government does not have their best interest at heart. Hlabangana states that enhanced marginalisation of this region is a continuation

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<sup>410</sup> Mr. Hlabangana, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>411</sup> Dube (Senior), April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>412</sup> Mr. Brian Nyathi, November 2015. Interviewed in Johannesburg, South Africa.

<sup>413</sup> Mr. Toto Nkosi (Toto), June 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

of Gukurahundi – only that it is now more structural and more systematic.<sup>414</sup> Sis' Siphos says, "There is so much displaced anger ... from all parties concerned. There is a lot of tribalism taking place. There are a lot of undercurrents".<sup>415</sup>

In a similar vein, Katherine highlights the identity residues that Gukurahundi increased.

Some key persons are missing from this discourse especially those living in the diaspora... who tend to move to South Africa as opposed to the capital city of Harare – for better economic opportunities. Many Ndebele youth are thus barely in this country...with most of them preferring to live as stateless people or assume a South African existence, rather than be Zimbabwean.<sup>416</sup>

Lastly, the final impact of Gukurahundi, as highlighted by participants, is about the spiritual consequences of war. I end this section with the statement below, which I believe captures the dominant thinking highlighted by participants.

You see places like Njelele [a national prayer shrine in Zimbabwe]. It doesn't rain anymore. The blood of the dead speaks. Zimbabwe is dry ... and is struggling as a country. It is because of the blood of the dead. Unaccounted for.<sup>417</sup>

The next chapter is largely grounded in theory. It looks at the literature on history and memory, and uses the lens of Gukurahundi to address various aspects of this discourse. Additionally, I discuss the memory-making of Gukurahundi amidst silences, as well as through a gendered lens.

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<sup>414</sup> Mr. Hlabangana, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>415</sup> Sis' Siphos, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>416</sup> Katherine, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>417</sup> Mr. Rasta, November 2015. Interviewed in Johannesburg, South Africa.

## CHAPTER 5. ABOUT MEMORY (1) – THEORY, TEMPORALITY, AND SILENCE(S)

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the literature and theoretical debates in the interlinked fields of history and memory and, to a lesser extent, ideas about trauma in relation to memory. The discussion explores which memories matter, or are central to the Gukurahundi story, and in so doing, questions the binaries created by rigid categories of culpability such as victims, perpetrators, and bystanders. The trajectories and temporalities of trauma between the past, present, and the future are also noted. Lastly, the chapter focuses on memory silences associated with Gukurahundi and draws attention, amongst other things, to the Government of Zimbabwe's state of denial of the atrocity, as well as to the memory wars surrounding it.

### 5.2 Theorising Memory (and History)

The study of memory is prominent amongst a variety of fields and discourses. Antze and Lambek highlight that memory studies have their roots in psychology and psychoanalysis, but that it has since grown as a discourse and come to inform history, anthropology, development, medicine and a whole host of other disciplines.<sup>418</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, the discussion focuses around ideas of memory, i.e. the debates and practices, and to an extent, its intrinsic relationship to the discipline of historical studies, given that these are the dominant discourses and spaces underlying the current research.

As briefly discussed in the introduction (chap. 1), memory and history are not necessarily the same thing. Jelin argues thus that “memory is by no means identical to history”.<sup>419</sup> The two have a dialectic synergy and inform each other, and can certainly manipulate each other's views at multiple levels and through diverse relationships. In further trying to explain their differentiation, Jelin goes on to state:

[M]emory is a crucial source to history, and this includes particularly the distortions, displacements and negations that characterize it ... In this sense, memory functions as a stimulus for the development of the agenda for historical research.<sup>420</sup>

Thus, memory can be relied upon to enhance historical research. Furthermore, sometimes

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<sup>418</sup> P. Antze and M. Lambek, *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

<sup>419</sup> E. Jelin, “State Repression and the Struggles for Memory” in E. Jelin (ed.), *History and Social Memory*, (London: Latin American Bureau, 2003), 56.

<sup>420</sup> Jelin, “State Repression and the Struggles for Memory”, 56.

memory can be used to correct ambivalent histories, even though such “ambivalences” are continuously reproduced in the synergy between memory and history. Lastly, memory is often an object of research in itself.

The idea that history is the ultimate truth – factual, scientifically verifiable, the written word and objective – while memory is unreliable, subjective, the oral word, and contains errors or falsities due to time lapses or context, has often been debated in academic circles, by radical positivists as well as radical constructivists.<sup>421</sup>

Cole, in his insightful offering entitled *How History is Bought, Packaged and Sold*, and speaking specifically with regard to the Holocaust, buttresses some of the falsities long associated with the official version of history.<sup>422</sup> These include his understanding that history is often a manipulation of facts and a packaging of events (largely, but not always, at the hand of the state or “victor”) for varying purposes, such as, post-conflict nation-building initiatives or the deliberate re-writing of history in order to avoid complicity and thus accountability. Trouillot highlights this thinking when he writes that “at best, history is a story about power, a story about those who won”, and notes how history itself in this domain becomes one sided ultimately.<sup>423</sup>

Buckley-Zistel exemplifies this school of thought when she writes about how Rwanda (ten years after the 1994 genocide) underwent a process involving “the deliberate public rewriting of history as part of the government’s efforts to unite the country”.<sup>424</sup> Additionally, she notes that this new historical construction was an idealised representation of the country’s colonial past, “glossing over significant social complexities and intellectually justifying a system of Tutsi minority rule”, which currently represents the interests of the ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front.<sup>425</sup> In this regard, the “truth” of history is manipulated. In a similar vein, Eltringham offers a seminal work on this same topic, detailing the uses and abuses of history in Rwanda.<sup>426</sup> He is critical of “absolutist” conventional modes of historical representation, which currently dominate collective consciousness and fail to recognize “a multiplicity of interpretations”.<sup>427</sup> The link between Rwanda and post-independent Zimbabwe in this regard is that the next generations are taught

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<sup>421</sup> D. La Capra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: JHU Press, 2001), 1.; Jelin, “State Repression and the Struggles for Memory”, 48.

<sup>422</sup> Tim Cole, “The Rise (and Fall?) of the Myth of the Holocaust” in Tim Cole (ed.), *Selling the Holocaust, From Auschwitz to Schindler. How History is Bought, Packaged and Sold* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>423</sup> M. Trouillot, *Silencing the past: Power and the production of history* (Beacon Press, 1995), 5.

<sup>424</sup> Buckley-Zistel, “Remembering to Forget”, 133.

<sup>425</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>426</sup> Eltringham, “Accounting for Horror Post-Genocide”, 21

<sup>427</sup> *Ibid.*



this official history in schools, while creating no room for alternative versions which are equally important.<sup>428</sup> Official history can never be all-encompassing, as it too silences certain narratives and excludes groups of people. For instance, as highlighted in previous chapters, there is an official history or ultimate truth of Gukurahundi, according to the Government of Zimbabwe. However, the representation of that history, unfortunately, is predominantly housed in such silences and is ultimately exclusive.

Of equal importance is demystifying the myth that one type of history must exist to the exclusion of others – as an official history can exist in tandem with variant unofficial histories. Buur asserts that official history is conveyed through official settings, such as in the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, in schoolbooks, and in official archives; and are often comprised of sanctioned and legitimated documents.<sup>429</sup> Local histories, in contrast, are implicit knowledge of the past conveyed through interaction and experience. This does not take away from the fact that local histories are also a specific genre of historical research and writing. They are very much about power in the same way that the national discourse is – although the difference might lie in the dynamics of the power relations. Furthermore, as highlighted by the CCJP and Coltart, amongst others, in a Zimbabwe, where state denial and silence abound, an official history no longer becomes adequate as the “only” story told of Gukurahundi injustices.<sup>430</sup> Naturally, more unofficial localised versions of the occurrence come to the fore in different ways. Thus, emotionally-laden occurrences such as Gukurahundi cannot be written about solely as history nor claim to represent the collective, as they need time to be processed and, more often than not, come about in the form of personalised memory.

In this regard, Jelin draws from Kaufman’s ideas when she highlights that when an event is sudden and intense in its impact, it often becomes detached from the world and remains without representation. As such, “the traumatic event is repressed or denied and is only registered later, after time has passed, through the appearance of a variety of symptoms”.<sup>431</sup> This could be the case where Gukurahundi is concerned as much of its occurrence is something without depiction; something which is shrouded in denials and controversies and which, transcending time, remains prevalent today. However, the problem with this “common deferred action”, along with all the typical assumptions made about it and analysis of it, as endorsed by scholars such as Caruth and before that Freud, is as to whether such analyses can indeed be extrapolated to a mass scale.

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<sup>428</sup> Eltringham, “Accounting for Horror Post-Genocide”, 21; Buckley-Zistel, “Remembering to Forget”, 133.

<sup>429</sup> Buur, “Monumental Historical Memory”, 75 – 76.

<sup>430</sup> Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, *Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe*; See Coltart, *The Struggle Continues*.

<sup>431</sup> Jelin, “State Repression and the Struggles for Memory”, 50.

It is important to highlight at this juncture that like history, there is not one kind of memory. For instance, Van der Kolk and Van der Hart suggest that “normal” narrative memories and “traumatic memories” are different.<sup>432</sup> This referential event-centred conception of trauma postulates that trauma memories are far more complex processes than those associated with the mere recall of past events and narratives; or which can simplistically be attributed as cognitive deteriorations, such as aging. They are therefore processed in uniquely variant ways. In this same school of thought, Antze and Lambek proceed to highlight that whilst there are many occurrences and contexts which provoke memory, along with a variety of reasons behind why the discourse of memory has become prominent, trauma seemingly has become most synonymous with the study of memory of late.<sup>433</sup> Walker refers to this same phenomenon, which she describes as the “traumatic paradox”, asserting that trauma memory is dynamically different to any other kind of memory and this thus alters one’s state and processing of it radically.<sup>434</sup>

Wiseman’s offering to this debate is that memories associated with trauma are often replaced, and this manifests as either repression or else in a confabulation.<sup>435</sup> Repression assumes a decanting, emptying, and erasure of trauma mentally, because of an inability to contain, articulate, conceive and even process the trauma. Confabulation, which sometimes occurs independently and sometimes as the next step of repression, posits that the memory is too difficult to handle, so much so that those who experienced the trauma reconfigure the whole story in a way that is better palatable to them. Essentially, the memory is misremembered or creatively remembered.

A key issue that distinguishes these schools of thought is that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) scholars such as Van Der Kolk tend to avoid and/or minimise the psychological dimensions of family; while those belonging to post-Freudian psychoanalytic schools, such as Antze and Lambek, focus on how trauma is constituted between childhood/family dynamics and the violence of adulthood.

What is clear from the ideas raised above is that there are many versions of trauma and trauma narratives within memory studies. Whilst it is certain that trauma occurs at the individual level, there is no consensus about how it impacts the engagement of a person in the broader context. As scholars and practitioners, we do not know enough to make such radical assertions.

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<sup>432</sup> B. Van der Kolk, and O. Van der Hart, O. “The Intrusive Past: the flexibility of memory and the engraving of trauma” in Cathy Caruth (ed.) *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, (Baltimore: JHU Press, 1995), 168.

<sup>433</sup> Antze and Lambek, *Tense Past: Cultural Essays*, xvii.

<sup>434</sup> Walker, J. “The traumatic paradox: autobiographical documentary and the psychology of memory” in K. Hodgkin and S. Radstone (eds.), *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory* (London: Routledge, 2003), 109.

<sup>435</sup> M. Wiseman, Memory Replacement, Confabulation, and Repression: Remembering Creatively. *Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse*, 2. (2010).

As it has been evinced that history is not equivalent to fact, Portelli conversely rebuts the common assumption that all memory is erroneous and subjective. Whilst it is often stated that the domain of memory does indeed fall between the realms of fantasy and of reality, Portelli emphasizes that memory (largely manifested through the oral) holds credibility, although it is a different kind of credibility or truth to what history represents. Portelli asserts:

The diversity of oral history consists in the fact that “wrong” statements are still psychologically “true”, and that this truth may be equally as important as factually reliable accounts.<sup>436</sup>

The importance of memory lies in the creation of meanings, the understanding of context, and the identities associated with a specific memory, more than in its veracity. Whilst many memories are not “factual”, the fact that they have meaning for people, has implications for people’s agency or lack thereof. Hence, oral historians and others focus on both verifiable and non-verifiable memories as being important.

Furthermore, a memory can be a public memory or a private memory, or both, as there is a relationship between these types of memories, more than there are binaries. Public memories tend to derive from the collective, where private ideas in a very real way represent individual understandings and experiences. Stone refers to “mass personal memory” as well as and vs. “national memory”, highlighting that not all private memory is individualistic, as is often stated about private memory.<sup>437</sup> But rather that some of it can be private memory and still represent the masses, whilst being very different from the public or national memory. Portelli aptly refers to this dichotomy as a “personal ‘truth’ that coincides with shared ‘imagination’”.<sup>438</sup> Essentially, Portelli is grappling with the ways in which personal memories are shared/not shared in public discourses. He highlights that usually the difference between public and private memory is not in the occurrence of the facts around the event itself, but around the meaning of the event. Hence, the difficulties of forming communal memory are that the expression, understanding, and vocalisation of that meaning themselves tend to be individual. Naturally, the challenge is around conceptualising to what extent our memories are “really ours as individuals” and to what extent they are a by-product of factors such as socialisation, ideology, and culture, amongst others.

In writing about Gukurahundi, especially through one-on-one interviews, the reality of writing about the collective and individualities remains complex. Many of these stories indeed have

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<sup>436</sup> Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories*, 51.

<sup>437</sup> D. Stone, *The Historiography of the Holocaust* in D. Stone (eds.) *Memory, Memorials and Museums* (London: Palgrave, MacMillan, 2004).

<sup>438</sup> Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories*, 49.

commonalities amongst survivors, but they also represent individuality of experience, are told in different ways, represent changing narratives, and various different kinds of trauma and experiences of violence. High, in his offering on mass violence – in which he is critical of referential uses of trauma – argues that we need to keep working through the “productive tensions between private and public memory”.<sup>439</sup> I do not claim through this research to generalise survivor occurrences, nor do I attempt to write about them as one experience and memory.

While many authors have spent energy trying to pit history against memory – as ultimate truth vs. falsity, or as the written aspect of history vs. the orality often associated with memory – it is not a useful debate for this dissertation. Instead, for the purposes of this study, and as highlighted in the discussion on methodology in chap. 2, it is important to rely on a research structure which enhances public and private memory in tandem with, or as informed by, history; and to draw from the synergies of both together.

### 5.3 Which Memories or Whose Memories Matter?

Trouillot aptly poses the question: “but what makes some narratives rather than others powerful enough to pass as accepted history [and/or memory]”?<sup>440</sup>

As Jelin highlights:

[T]he traumatic event has its greatest and most clearly unjustifiable effect on the victim, but in different ways it also affects everyone who comes in contact with it: perpetrator, collaborator, bystander, resister, those born later.<sup>441</sup>

An important part of every study is thus to determine which memories or whose memories are being shared. Additionally, it is always intriguing to ask questions about why people agree to be interviewed and to share the information that they do. Naturally, the reasons why participants choose to be involved in oral historiography also impact the way that the memories are told and how they should be understood.<sup>442</sup>

Amongst myriads of memory-makers, I turn attention to debates on survivor and perpetrator binaries. Admittedly, this Gukurahundi research focus is on survivor memories, and the reasons behind this scope have been discussed and detailed fully in chap. 2 on research methodology and

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<sup>439</sup> High, “Holocaust : Private Memories”, 43

<sup>440</sup> Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 7.

<sup>441</sup> Jelin, “State Repression and the Struggles for Memory”, 56.

<sup>442</sup> Ntsimane, “Why should I tell my Story”, 125.

design. Amongst a variety of reasons posited for such a specific focus on survivors to the neglect of perpetrators, was the reality that those deemed to be “perpetrators”, along with their memories – against the current backdrop of a thriving era and rhetoric of human rights – are not willing to take up such labels, identities, and ultimately to engage with such research. Being a perpetrator usually represents shame; it can be an acknowledgement of guilt; and it exemplifies being on the wrong side of history. Typically, no one wants to be associated with, or will willingly share, a negative memory of perpetration. Additionally, Gukurahundi fingers point to high-profile members of government who continue to be in rulership today, and therefore the idea of perpetration automatically becomes off-limits. In ‘*A Tale of Three Dinner Plates*’ and based on a politically motivated conflict experience in Gomoza mission, Lupane District (Zimbabwe) which resulted in a hunt for perpetrators and victims; Eppel found that

[W]hat we might call the ‘psychological truth’ is comparatively straightforward: nobody will admit to having been a perpetrator, or if they do, it was only because they were fully justified in what they did, although what happened to them was not justified. Everybody is a victim in one way or another.<sup>443</sup>

Hatzfeld and other authors point to the idea that victim/perpetrator binaries are theoretical.<sup>444</sup> Seemingly trying to decipher who was victimised or survived, and who did the victimising is often not easily delineable. Oftentimes, perpetrators were once victims themselves and vice versa.<sup>445</sup> Eppel discusses these blurred binaries and notes how political affiliation in Zimbabwe often determines one's level of victimhood, or perpetration with any occurrence.<sup>446</sup> Additionally, it is hard to prove a perpetrator's level of “perpetrator-hood”, in the same way that it would be twisted and difficult to prove or rank levels of victimhood or “survivor-hood”. Depending on what one is – i.e. survivor, perpetrator, or both (and even bystander) – ultimately impacts the memory that the participant chooses to share with an interviewer at the time.

Victims and perpetrators move in and out of these roles. Several authors such as Jesse draw attention to lessons from the Rwandan Genocide of 1994, as exemplifying this.<sup>447</sup> Lee Ann Fuji's Chapter in *Resisting Genocide : The Multiple Forms of Rescue*, demonstrates movement within these roles through what she terms ‘killer rescuers’. In this regard, she shares examples of self-

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<sup>443</sup> Eppel, Shari. “A Tale of Three Dinner Plates: Truth and the Challenges of Human Rights Research in Zimbabwe”, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 35, no. 4 (2009), 973

<sup>444</sup> Hatzfeld, *A Time for Machetes*, 2005b.

<sup>445</sup> P. Gobodo-Madikizela, *A Human Being Died that Night. A Story of Forgiveness*, (Cape Town: David Phillip, 2003).

<sup>446</sup> Eppel, Shari. “A Tale of Three Dinner Plates: Truth and the Challenges of Human Rights Research in Zimbabwe”, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 35, no. 4 (2009), 970 – 971.

<sup>447</sup> Jesse Erin, ‘Beyond Perpetrators: Complex Political Actors Surrounding the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda’. In A. Smeulders, W. Maartje and H. Barbora (eds.), *Perpetrators of International Crimes : Theories, Methods and Evidence*. (Oxford University Press, 2019).

confessed killers or genocidaires who in several ways during the Rwanda killings performed acts which resulted in fleeing persons surviving.<sup>448</sup> These included acts such as Interahamwe members warning fleeing Tutsi's to avoid certain paths where fellow Interahamwe awaited them, or even hiding neighbours.<sup>449</sup> Ashuntantang shares similar stories in her writing on Rwanda where she says

“Georges Rutaganda is today serving a life term for crimes against humanity. I would like to hope that Paul Rusesabagina would join me in acknowledging that on May 3rd, 1994, Georges Rutaganda risked his life to save refugees, including Paul's wife, at a roadblock in Kigali.<sup>450</sup>

If victims and perpetrators move within and without these binaries, this means that not all survivor memories are innocent, in the same way that not all perpetrators represent evil and banality. Additionally, there is the myth that perpetrators are incapable of having a memory deserving of credence and attention. Too often, perpetrator traumas and remorse over their actions are dismissed, in judgment of them. Browning gives an example contrary to this thinking.<sup>451</sup> His research on Reserve Police Battalion 101 draws attention to soldiers being given alcohol after they had shot the instructed number of Jews during the Holocaust. It is debatable whether the alcohol was a reward for their work, or else a means to help these “seeming perpetrators” and now also “traumatised victims and survivors” under a chain of command – who happened to be following protocol – to forget or numb their pain. These “perpetrators” now have to deal with the emotional ramifications and memory of their work.

These emotional memories and traumas are thus manifest differently, including in feelings of anxiety, rage, fear, heroism, patriotism, masculinity, etc. Together, all these emotions involved in memory work, add to a complex retelling – and more so, evince the difficulty in proving whose memories should matter between the various levels and complicities of people involved.

Whilst not a focus of the research per se, I speak to the idea of “perpetrators” here because Gukurahundi as a topic abounds with binaries. We see it in narratives in which Fifth Brigade

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<sup>448</sup> Lee Ann Fuji, ‘Rescuers and Killer-Rescuers During the Rwanda Genocide : Rethinking Standard Categories of Analysis’ In Jacques Sémelin, Claire Andrieu, and Sarah Gensburger (eds.), *Resisting Genocide : the Multiple Forms of Rescue* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

<sup>449</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>450</sup> Joyce Ashuntantang, ‘Hollywood's Representations of Human Rights : the Case of Terry George's Hotel Rwanda in Maryellen's Higgins (ed.), *Hollywood's Africa after 1994* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012), 65.

<sup>451</sup> C. Browning, “German Memory, Judicial Interrogation and Historical reconstruction: Writing Perpetrator History from Post War Testimony” in S. Friedlander (ed.), *Probing the Limits of Representation, Nazism and the Final Solution*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

soldiers are all seen as perpetrators (see the discussion in the previous chapter – chap. 4 – in which the focus is on the Fifth Brigade). A sizeable number of interviewees, along with literature, point to some of the psychosocial consequences suffered by Fifth Brigade soldiers, for instance, who following a line of command given by the Zimbabwean president himself, and whilst responsible for the deaths of thousands of people, also live with a memory of, and oftentimes disturbances over, the atrocities. Later in the chapter, when I write about memory-making within a cultural lens, I draw attention to a former Fifth Brigade soldier, who has nightmares whilst sleeping as a result of his distress, often remembering the faces and voices of people whom he killed in the line of duty.

Oftentimes, in sharing memory of such events, people become stereotypically characterised. Jelin highlights the tendency of survivors/victims brutalising others, thus relieving themselves of moral responsibility.<sup>452</sup> As highlighted in the paragraph above, in the case of Gukurahundi, it has become easy to delineate victim or survivor status largely and erroneously to Ndebele and other cultural groups found in the Matabelelands and Midlands provinces. Contrarily, most “Shona-identifying” people become characterised as perpetrators. And yet, in the middle of these fluid ethnic groupings and constructions, lie many complexities including, for instance, the existence of “mixed” families, i.e. those whose families as a whole comprise of both Shona and Ndebele identifiers amongst them.

Interestingly, most interview participants highlighted their gratitude when they realised that they were being interviewed by someone (me) who identified as an acculturated Ndebele person. Many stated overtly that they would not have allowed me to interview them had I been Shona-speaking; or else they intimated that they would have given “pretend” or “sabotaged” responses, which would not have given the researcher any real truth or insight into their situation. Gogo Thandeka stated that she would doubt the genuineness of any Shona interviewer – as she would be convinced that the sole purpose of this person’s research would ultimately be to spy on her and to get her killed, for “talking too much”.<sup>453</sup> Seemingly, in this regard, I was viewed as an “insider” of sorts. One could question how this shared identification frames assumptions or other silences between myself and the interviewee.

Msindo argues that the Shona language in Zimbabwe has become a language of domination and that its continued use reinforces the oppression of other non-Shona-speaking people. He further

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<sup>452</sup> Jelin, “State Repression and the Struggles for Memory”, 58.

<sup>453</sup> Gogo Thandeka, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

argues that conversing in Shona to a Gukurahundi survivor becomes an insult and instantly revives memories of subjugation at the hand of the Fifth Brigade.<sup>454</sup> Eppel and Ndlovu-Gatsheni reached similar conclusions in their research.<sup>455</sup> Intriguingly, many interviewees – participants in this study – when speaking about encounters with the Fifth Brigade, automatically began to switch from speaking isiNdebele to speaking in chiShona. MaNcube, for example, used basic sentences such as those listed below when she recalled encounters with the Fifth Brigade. In what she believes are soldiers' voices, she re-enacts:

- “*Iwe huuya pano*” (You come here);
- “*Arikupi madissident? Nhasi richataura chokwadi*” (Where are the dissidents? Today you will tell the truth); and
- “*Yah, wawuya nhasi. Garai pasi*” (Oh, today have finally come. Sit down).<sup>456</sup>

MaNcube is not the only one who does this. Myriad participants – both women and men – defaulted to speaking like this when sharing their experiences of Gukurahundi. Over and above the language, they took on an authoritative and abrasive masculine tone as part of the retelling. Thus, languages are used as a means of delineating the language of the perpetrator from the language of the victim/survivor.

Whilst MaNcube determined never to learn Shona, it is intriguing to note that these phrases stuck and still came to mind when she shared her story.

The accusation of the Shona people – where Gukurahundi is concerned – stems from many places. For instance, ZANU-PF at the time of Gukurahundi was largely, although not solely, Shona. However, like PF-ZAPU, the political parties at that time began to be synonymously associated with, and represented, strong partisanship based on the ethnic.<sup>457</sup> Additionally, and as highlighted earlier, the Gukurahundi army spoke Shona, and made victims and survivors sing Shona songs as well as chant Shona slogans, such that their memories remain hinged on the idea that all Shona are perpetrators – as a result of the proliferation of the language in that era. Brian Nyathi states:

[A]t a *pungwe* (compulsory night vigils) we would spend all the time singing there. Calling *pamberi* with this and *pasi* for that.<sup>458</sup>

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<sup>454</sup> E. Msindo, *Ethnicity in Zimbabwe: Transformations in Kalanga and Ndebele Societies, 1860-1990* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2012).

<sup>455</sup> Eppel, “Gukurahundi: the need for Truth”; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, “Nation Building In Zimbabwe”.

<sup>456</sup> MaNcube, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>457</sup> Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP), *Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe*.

<sup>458</sup> Brian Nyathi, November 2015. Interviewed in Johannesburg, South Africa.; Also Pamberi is a Shona term, synonymously associated as part of ZANU slogan or chant making. It is said as a part of a sentence e.g. ‘pamberi ne



Eventually, the community began to label these soldiers with the name *opasi* because of all the chanting they made them do.

Through the Unity Accord, ZAPU folded into ZANU, and this meant that the Mthwakazi populace felt that they lost a party, which best represented their interests, and were forced into an unhappy marriage with a political people and party that had caused them harm. In this school of thought, myriads of innocent Shona-speaking peoples find themselves referred to as perpetrators, bystanders, and beneficiaries. These created memories obviously do not hold truth in most cases about everyone and everything. However, as memory is subjective and is in reality created around the socio-economic, political, and cultural realities experienced, one can see how they become truth in those spaces. Multiple forces are shaping the condensed foci and/or erasure of memory themes within people's minds, bodies, etc.

## 5.4 Memory – A Different Temporal Logic

One of the first aspects I want to highlight here is based around the reality that memory holds a different temporal space, and often conflates the past with, and informs, the present as well as the future together. Additionally, in time, the memory tends to outlive the historical event. On the temporality of memory and its fluidity across time, Jelin cites Caruth's work and comes up with the following assertion: memory "is not linear or chronological but is characterized by breaches, ruptures, and the repetition of symptoms that do not fade or become diluted with the mere passage of time".<sup>459</sup>

As noted earlier, Portelli in his work found that there is still "anger, with which, thirty years later, workers still repeat that 'Nothing' was done after Trastulli's death".<sup>460</sup> Whilst time has passed and the historical event has lapsed, the memory is very much alive. Intriguingly, Portelli states that this event – Trastulli's death – took no more than 30 minutes in its actual occurrence, yet its memory forever changed the identity and remains etched in the social culture of the town. Gukurahundi is no exception to this conflation of chronology and meaning: as the numerous interviews highlight, it is spoken of as a memory no longer confined to its actual time frame and existence. Several of the interviews conducted cemented Rothenberg's idea of different temporalities and trajectories of memory.<sup>461</sup> These ideas on memory tie in closely with a phrase

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ZANU PF' translated to mean 'forward with the ZANU PF movement'; and is usually accompanied by a downing of something else. I.e. 'Pasi ne ma dissidents' would be translated to mean a downing to all dissidents.

<sup>459</sup> Jelin, "State Repression and the Struggles for Memory", 51.

<sup>460</sup> Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories*, 18.

<sup>461</sup> Rothenberg, *Multidirectional Memory*.

discussed in chap. 4 – *iGukurahundi ayipheli* (Gukurahundi does not end). Participant responses highlighted the idea that Gukurahundi – to an individual person or in a collective – is not “one” memory, but rather tends to be a series of memories and trauma. Some of these memories were made within Gukurahundi itself, whereas others were made before it or after it. This is similar to Eltringham, whose findings on Rwanda show that whilst speaking about the 1994 genocide, often participants are interpreting it through, or else speaking about, the 1959 social revolution in terms of a continuum representative of an ongoing genocidal project.

While I, as the interviewer, spoke of Gukurahundi as a memory of an occurrence or a time-bound event in the past, the respondents highlighted that they have been continually subjected to violations over protracted periods and so now Gukurahundi represents all of these compressed memories together – and more. Whilst many of the violations and trauma are routed in violence and torturous circumstances, many more of these Gukurahundi memories are now represented and seen in socio-economic and political struggles/injustices today. For instance, the food insecurity experienced by the country as a whole in 2008, whilst not a physically violent occurrence, remains a violation all the same. Oftentimes, you will hear participants refer to such instances of national drought and food scarcity in 2008, as being memories of Gukurahundi. This is understandable, as one of the many struggles associated with Gukurahundi memory is hunger. Speaking to some of these socio-economic struggles as part of Gukurahundi, can be analysed as a representation of citizens’ remembrance whereby they may feel that the government does not care enough about their day-to-day existence and struggles, in the same way that the government did not care about their fate at the hands of the Fifth Brigade.

Another example of a Gukurahundi memory in the present is made by Thobela Moyo.<sup>462</sup> In his narration of Gukurahundi, he spoke of matches between rival football teams in Zimbabwe – Highlanders F.C and Dynamos F.C. – as a constant reminder of Gukurahundi. Based on a very loose translation of Thobela’s narrative, the roots of these teams are associated with ethnicity or else geography, and to a certain extent politics. In this reading, Highlanders, to its supporters, represents a form of “Ndebeleness” or “Mthwakazi” identity, with its roots in the Matabelelands, initially formed by staunch ZAPU supporters at the time. Dynamos too hails a brand of “Shonanness” in identity, and by default and very simplistically, would be conflated with a similar political alliance. Thobela views every win against the Dynamos as some kind of ethno-political win; and sees every loss as some reminder of Shona dominance. Sadly, the history of matches between these two teams has been mired in violence, with supporters from both sides taking it

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<sup>462</sup> Thobela Moyo, May 2014. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

personally at a political level. These events provide a fascinating and tragic story about how these historical and cultural differences are influencing “everyday popular events”. Much of Thobela’s assertions reveal the complexities of identities as captured in his memory. Additionally, without discounting his ethnic assumptions, the rivalry could also really be expressing a geographical competition between the two cities.

In a similar vein, Mamdani, when writing on lessons of Zimbabwe’s land reform process, and Scarnecchia, when making observations about the public beatings, torture, disappearances, and killings of opposition MDC supporters after what was a democratic defeat of ZANU–PF via the ballot in 2008, both note how the parallels of violence bring to mind former ordeals, from the past into the present. Contemporary events will evoke a range of tough emotions, from past periods of violence like Gukurahundi. The aftermath of mass violence has complex emotional and material effects some of which might be linked to trauma, and some not.

In Matabeleland South, five different interviewees from the Gwanda area highlighted that the Gukurahundi army camped right next door to their local primary school and settled there for some months. Mama ka Zonda says that as she went to school daily, she (and other learners) were susceptible to different violations and trauma, such as the presence of an army at school.<sup>463</sup> The erratic behaviour of this army included hitting/killing teachers, students, and community members for no apparent reason. The trauma, and constant reality, for Mama ka Zonda during this era was knowing that on very frequent occasions (in her case she highlighted about once every two or three days) – on one’s way to school – the students would be called out by the army and abused sexually. This happened all the time, at the hand of several different army officials – for as long as that army was camped in that vicinity. So her memory of that time is not a once-off memory – it becomes one continuous reality; a form of structural trauma in essence.

Furthermore, in the telling of such memories, oft times the narrator is no longer linear or chronological, as it can all become a continuous blur. Trouillot draws attention to this, when he asserts that history and memory has falsely required a “linear and cumulative sense of time that allows the observer to isolate the past as a distinct entity”. Yet, both the “popular and scholarly versions assume the independent existence of a fixed past and posit memory as the retrieval of that content. But the past does not exist independently from the present”.<sup>464</sup>

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<sup>463</sup> Mama ka Zonda, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>464</sup> Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 7, 15.

## 5.5 Memories of Silence or Silenced Memories

The term “silence” within the context of a genocide certainly has many different connotations to it. For example, it can represent the silencing of a people or else the silencing of an event in itself, and more significantly, alter the ways in which memories of the occurrence are made. Silence could be many things, including: the inability to talk about one’s pain; a denial; an act of fear; a forgetting; and/or even a remembering. As will be discussed in chap. 8, silence is a coping mechanism or else a chosen path to tranquillity and healing – for some survivors. In general, even in the absence of a genocidal context, silence is an integral part of memory-making.

In the context of Zimbabwe, at the national level, it is in the government’s best interest to deny and silence Gukurahundi for a variety of reasons. One of these is that denial and silence are a means to avoid complicity for the human rights neglected and the crimes against humanity committed, in view of trends in international justice. Additionally, an acknowledgement of guilt would thus be an acknowledgment of responsibility, incurring the government with reparation costs, among other ramifications. Of greater significance is the issue that many of the implicated are in senior leadership positions in the country, and this would impact their occupancy of such.

Therefore, on all matters of Gukurahundi, the forceful silencing *by* the government *of* victims (and civilians in general) has been maintained through producing silences. In mapping out the politicisation of Gukurahundi by the country’s national leadership, I note the memory wars surrounding the occurrence. These include the Zimbabwean government’s initial response of denial of the occurrence of Gukurahundi. This state denial resulted in much evidence of Gukurahundi’s existence being unacknowledged and remaining concealed from the public domain for a long time. Eppel notes:

[A] good decade after the 1980s most people nationally and internationally remained ignorant about Gukurahundi, i.e. they were unaware of the true scale of it – as well as uninformed about the devastating impact of this war.<sup>465</sup>

For instance, in the past, there was a lack of access to documentation on Gukurahundi. Auret asserts that he personally delivered two copies each of CCJP’s “Breaking the Silence” report and “Recommendation Document”, containing comprehensive research and evidence about Gukurahundi, to the president’s office; sent an additional four letters on official Zimbabwe Catholics Bishops Conference<sup>466</sup> (ZCBC) letterheads; and made 69 phone calls to the president’s

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<sup>465</sup> Eppel, “Gukurahundi: the need for Truth”, 46.

<sup>466</sup> Please note that ZCBC does not refer to a specific conference held on a certain date and time. It is the name of the gathering or the institution.

office, requesting a meeting with the bishops, so that they could brief him on their investigations.<sup>467</sup> Such a meeting was never secured, and receipt of the report and recommendations remains unacknowledged till this day (supposedly as part of the denial strategy). However, Auret believes that incidentally, the president has often referred to information emanating from these unacknowledged documents.<sup>468</sup> Eventually, after any effort to give people access to the CCJP report had been stifled by the Zimbabwean government for over ten years, the report was leaked to the *Mail & Guardian* in South Africa and was finally published in 2007, retailing at Exclusive Books. Most civilians who have a copy of the published report note the lengths to which they went to procure it in South Africa.

In this CCJP report, for instance, there are detailed records of how and where killings, torture, and disappearances were carried out by different armed personnel involved in the Gukurahundi story – these actions were in and of themselves a type of silencing, also meant to cause emotional distress. For example, a child asked to shoot their parent (as happened on occasion) remains powerless and silenced by the reality that they pulled the trigger which resulted in their parent's death. The shame of it all is both damaging and silencing. Additionally, not only was the burying of victims in mine shafts, such as Bhalagwe, by the Fifth Brigade meant to hide the levels of atrocities being committed, but it was also an act of silencing, since people do not know the details – or have the finality of knowing – where their kith and kin died or are buried. Not knowing is a silencing. Stoler states that not knowing produces silences within survivors and increases their experience of “epistemic anxieties”.<sup>469</sup>

The Dumbutshena Commission on the Entumbane Uprisings<sup>470</sup> and the Chihambakwe Commission of Enquiry reports on the Gukurahundi massacres – both undertaken in the 1980s – have never been released, and access to them remains closed to date. After repeated requests from pressure groups requesting the release of these papers, the Zimbabwean Minister of Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, in March 2002, stated that the Dumbutshena document “disappeared”.<sup>471</sup>

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<sup>467</sup> Auret, *From Liberator to Dictator*, 121-122.

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>469</sup> Stoler, “Epistemic Politics”.

<sup>470</sup> In the Entumbane Uprisings ZANU-PF and PF-ZAPU military personnel - incorporated into the new Zimbabwean National Army turned their guns on each other. The Dumbutshena Commission was an investigation into this occurrence – which preceded Gukurahundi by a few months.

<sup>471</sup> Eg <https://www.change.org/p/zimbabwe-government-of-national-unity-release-the-chihambakwe-and-dumbutshena-reports>

Eg <https://www.thestandard.co.zw/2012/01/28/group-demands-Gukurahundi-reports>

It must be noted that this culture and/or strategy of silencing, including through lack of inquiry into issues, is not new *modus operandi* in the country. Thus, Gukurahundi is not the only incidence of death, pain, as well as trauma having been silenced. Neither is this a pattern that emerged only after independence when Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF came into power, as is often assumed. Pre-independence, into the 1960s, there is a clear history of African voices being silenced and legislation being enacted by the Rhodesian regime to ensure that liberation movements such as ZAPU and ZANU were not allowed to exist, and thus were destroyed – with a heavy hand. Authors such as Ranger and Coltart note that Rhodesia was a one-party state then, and they map out the journey that liberation movements went through, simply to exist.<sup>472</sup> Much of this is detailed by ZAPU founder, Joshua Nkomo, in his autobiography, *The Story of My Life*.<sup>473</sup> This is the same environment/*modus operandi*, and these are the same laws, which President Robert Mugabe inherited and applied for self-serving purposes post-1980.

To substantiate the point highlighted above, Auret draws attention to the State of Emergency which was enacted, in 1965, by Ian Smith as a response to threats from black nationalist “insurgents” re-entering the country, round about the time that he had unilaterally declared independence from Britain.<sup>474</sup> Scarnecchia highlights that State of Emergency powers, whilst varied, included: stringent curfews; deliberate use of food shortages against “terrorists and the civilians feeding the terrorists”; transport bans; as well as ad-hoc arrests of, in particular, “international journalists” and “nationalists” – all without accountability.<sup>475</sup> Why Robert Mugabe chose to continue this State of Emergency into 1990, well into the new Zimbabwe, is simply because he realised he was able to abuse this legislation for his political gains.

Central to ZANU-PF's existence is ensuring that opposition politics are quashed. There were attempts to interfere with Gukurahundi memory through the disabling and silencing of PF-ZAPU's leadership memory and its structures during this difficult period. In 1982, arrests of practically all of ZAPU's senior leadership occurred, including, notably, Dumiso Dabengwa and Lookout Masuku, who were detained for four years, even after acquittal. Joshua Nkomo was also exiled during this time.<sup>476</sup> Seemingly, President Robert Mugabe was able to continue to uphold

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<sup>472</sup> Ranger, *Bulawayo Burning the Social History of a Southern African City, 1893-1960*; .Coltart, *The Struggle Continues*.

<sup>473</sup> J. Nkomo, *Nkomo : the Story of My Life* (Harare: SAPES Books, 2001).

<sup>474</sup> Auret, *From Liberator to Dictator*, 98.

<sup>475</sup> T. Scarnecchia, *Rationalising Gukurahundi: Cold War and South African Foreign Relations with Zimbabwe, 1981-1983*, (Kronos: Kent State University, 2011).

<sup>476</sup> Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP), *Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe*; S.Eppel, “Healing the Dead: Exhumation and Reburial as Truth-Telling and Peace-Building Activities in Rural Zimbabwe” in T. Borer (ed.), *Telling the Truths: Truth Telling and Peace Building in Post-Conflict Societies* \*Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006).

and legally use these same statutes to continue legacies whereby “lack of freedoms” abounded.

Another example, over and above the State of Emergency powers, is the Rhodesian Front's 1975 Indemnity and Compensation Act, which was repealed by President Mugabe's government in 1981, but unfortunately reintroduced by him in 1982. Its continued use in the new Zimbabwe was for the exact same purposes for which it had been introduced in 1975 by Ian Smith's regime, i.e. "in order to protect ministers, the police force and other service personnel from prosecution for violations of human rights committed 'in good faith' in the fight against terrorism".<sup>477</sup> Basically, this legislation is silencing and is a form of impunity as it protects “abusers” for their misconduct in the line of duty.

Additionally, the use of state-owned media – including print, press, and television – as a tool is not unique from the previous examples. It is a practice inherited from the Smith regime, and then further tightened and consolidated under the new regime, as highlighted by Chuma.<sup>478</sup> Auret writes about how the Rhodesian Front in the 1960s already had state censorship over what people could hear or view.<sup>479</sup> He goes on further to say that state-controlled media was so effective that it not only censored information, but also with the guidance of a South African propaganda expert, Harvey Ward, became a mouthpiece for the party.<sup>480</sup> Dissenting voices and views were thus not prohibited, and whatever the masses were privy to, was largely a product of the propaganda machinery. Indeed, this is still a caricature of Zimbabwean media today.

Where Gukurahundi is concerned, mechanisms were put in place to avoid word getting out and largely to prevent holding President Mugabe and his party accountable for their actions through the manipulation and control of the media – which has been a significant agent of silencing and denial. Evidence of this control is seen through examples such as Jean Maitland-Stuart, the then Editor of the *Manica Post*, being forced to resign in September 1981, after publishing speculation about a Gukurahundi army being trained by the North Koreans and deployed.<sup>481</sup>

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<sup>477</sup> Auret, *From Liberator to Dictator*, 73 – 74.

<sup>478</sup> W. Chuma, "Liberating or Limiting the Public Sphere? Media Policy and the Zimbabwe Transition, 1980 – 2004" in B. Raftopolous and T.Savage (eds.), *Zimbabwe: Injustice and Political Reconciliation*, African Minds, 2004. Over and above some of the older statutes concerning media, Chuma draws attention to some other laws implemented by the new regime to augment the former. Examples include Access to Information and Privacy Act (AIPPA) – 2002; Public Order and Security Act (POSA) – 2002; and the Broadcasting Services Act (BSA) – 2002.

<sup>479</sup> Auret, *From Liberator to Dictator*, 26.

<sup>480</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>481</sup> Chuma, "Liberating or Limiting the Public Sphere"; See also, Nyarota former Editor of the Bulawayo Chronicle, has been detained 6 times, and his Daily News offices were bombed twice. A ban was eventually put on the paper, and Geoffrey fled to exile in the UK in 2003. Whilst he did not write about Gukurahundi during his tenure as editor, his exposed of other scandals at governmental level such as Willowgate and a myriad of newsworthy matters over the years was deemed to be subversive. G. Nyarota, *Against the Grain: Memoirs of a Zimbabwean Newsmen*. Zebra, 2006.

The state then owned, and still owns and controls information. This has ensured that Gukurahundi, dissenting voices, opposition parties, and minority agendas are excluded from the state's developmental agenda. Of this, Chuma asserts that

rather than becoming a site for national reconciliation, the public broadcaster performed a divisive role in accordance with the strategic needs of the dominant blocs within the new regime.<sup>482</sup>

Phimister draws attention to several foreign media outlets, including but not limited to South Africa's *Rand Daily Mail*, Britain's *Guardian* newspaper, and the United States' *Newsweek*, which all attempted to highlight Matabeleland atrocities during Gukurahundi in February 1983.<sup>483</sup> He notes the denials of Gukurahundi nationally, even though knowledge of it was beginning to come out in fragments internationally.

Spokesmen for the Harare regime denied every foreign news report. Nor did Harare's stance alter in the face of mounting domestic criticism.<sup>484</sup>

Additionally, the state enforces silences by ensuring that the public has no available platforms from which their needs/voices can be expressed. Eppel states:

[I]n the post-colonial peace era that began in April 1980, there was no concerted formalised attempt to allow truth telling or to promote reconciliation between the three warring parties – ZANU-PF, PF-ZAPU and the Rhodesians.<sup>485</sup>

Beyond the Zimbabwean government, it must be noted that there has been passive silence from the regional and international community. Scarnecchia notes that no Western or neighbouring country, (nor the then Organisation of African Unity), aware of Gukurahundi, publicly criticised President Mugabe, but rather hailed him as a fine leader and continued to give him development support and aid.<sup>486</sup> Cameron, who obtained information (2,600 pages of documentation) through Freedom of Information (FOI) requests to various British government ministries and offices, asserts that there was a wilful blindness on the part of the British Conservative government under Margaret Thatcher at the time concerning the goings-on in Zimbabwe, and instead a blatant endorsement of Robert Mugabe's ideals.<sup>487</sup> Her paper proceeds to provide evidence for these

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<sup>482</sup> Chuma, "Liberating or Limiting the Public Sphere", 124.

<sup>483</sup> Phimister, "Zimbabwe is Mine", 475

<sup>484</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>485</sup> Eppel, "Healing the Dead", 262.

<sup>486</sup> T. Scarnecchia, *Rationalizing Gukurahundi: Cold war and South African Foreign Relations with Zimbabwe, 1981-1983*. (Kronos: Kent State University, 2011), 89.

<sup>487</sup> Cameron, "The Matabeleland Massacres", 1- 2.



assertions, highlighting that Robin Byatt – the British High Commissioner in Harare – and Major General Shortis’ – the Commander of the British Military Advisory Training Team (BMATT) – “were consistent in their efforts to minimize the magnitude of Fifth Brigade atrocities”, in a bid to further their political interests with Zimbabwe – whereas the United States, with the same information in hand, condemned these actions.<sup>488</sup> Her cables include accounts of BMATT, despite knowing, continuing to “offer their assistance towards the training of Fifth Brigade, including the forty three members of Fifth Brigade who were at that point in time attending courses at the BMATT training base of Inkomo”.<sup>489</sup>

In addition, South Africa’s vested interest in Zimbabwe – therefore its destabilising the political situation through supporting occurrences such as Gukurahundi (i.e. Super ZAPU), out of fear of the ANC’s own heightened liberation efforts in a domino effect – are well documented, and have been addressed in various parts of the thesis.

Despite state denial of Gukurahundi, the presence of witnesses, mass graves, the resurgence of written reports since the late 1990s, and medical reports archived from the 1980s, have all provided much needed evidence of the occurrence.<sup>490</sup> In light of this ever-present evidence, President Robert Mugabe eventually, in 1997 (ten years later), briefly – and possibly by way of acknowledging its existence – referred to Gukurahundi as a fleeting “moment of madness”. Seemingly, while there is no longer a blatant denial of Gukurahundi, the Government of Zimbabwe has chosen to diminish its significance by merely referring to it as “a moment” and thereafter deliberately not engaging the issue publicly in any convincing manner.

Meanwhile, as Eppel writes:

[W]here there is no official or state memory of Gukurahundi, there is scarcely a family or a household in Matabeleland that escaped the violence of those years or its memory today. A 1998 survey showed that 75% of the rural population are survivors of state organised violence (80 % is directly linked to Gukurahundi) in the 1980’s. Thus, they believe that Gukurahundi violence was far worse than that of the Liberation War.<sup>491</sup>

In light of the statistic above, it is indeed crucial to highlight that whilst Gukurahundi is a lived

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<sup>488</sup>Cameron, “The Matabeleland Massacres”, 1- 2

<sup>489</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>490</sup> Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and Legal Resources Foundation. “Breaking the Silence”

<sup>491</sup> Eppel, “Gukurahundi: the need for Truth”, 46

reality amongst victims, many of them have also been taciturn and silenced themselves. A large number of victims (and perpetrators) have turned to silence on the matter and choose not to talk about their experiences for several reasons. These could include a fear of victimisation if they speak out; an inability to comprehend the gravity of their experiences; or the numbing effect as well as the memory lapses that occur as a result of the trauma, yielding to an inability to recollect the story.<sup>492</sup> Practically, citizenry silenced themselves for a long time because of the reality that President Mugabe – whom they attributed as being at the helm of this strife – was still in power; and thus they felt there was no medium through which they could tell their story and be heard, and/or see meaningful change. Whilst Mugabe no longer holds this office, the current incumbent, Emmerson Mnangagwa, is not guiltless with regard to Gukurahundi, so it is likely that it will not be addressed as long as the current dispensation remains.

Additionally, there is ample evidence in which survivors choose not to pass down trauma to the next generation and so remain silent – as a means to protect their children and grandchildren from the emotional burdens. While many parents have this protective desire, not talking about their memories of violence and its aftermath *does not* prevent the transmission of trauma or other emotional legacies across generations. Chap. 7 discusses cross-generational memories in greater detail, and this idea will be interrogated and evinced there. A quote from Wiseman et al. speaks to this aspect here:

[A]n intergenerational communication pattern referred to as the “conspiracy of silence” is a nonverbal agreement in the family of keeping some traumatic experiences unspoken and detached from everyday life. It emanated not only from the parents’ need to forget and to adjust to new social contexts, but also from their belief that withholding information about the horrors of the Holocaust was crucial to their children’s normal development.<sup>493</sup>

On this, the authors further state that children are usually cognisant of their parents’ need to keep silent, and therefore a “double wall of silence” is developed and mutually maintained across generations.

Buckley-Zistel, in speaking about Rwanda, refers to the idea of a collective amnesia, where citizens are not necessarily silenced by others, but choose to silently forget their knowledge of certain truths or history amongst them. These occurrences are deliberately ignored or willed away, in order to enable the communities (in this case, Tutsis and Hutus) to live side by side in

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<sup>492</sup>K. McKinney, “Testimony, Traumatic Memory, and Psychotherapy with Survivors of Political Violence. Breaking the Conspiracy of Silence”. *Ethos* 35, no. 3 (2007), 270.

<sup>493</sup> Wiseman, “Memory Replacement, Confabulation, and Repression”, 177.

the aftermath of traumatic occurrences.<sup>494</sup> Nandy refers to this as unwitting forgetfulness “which helps a person to reconcile with and live in the world”; and adaptive forgetfulness, where “human beings just cannot afford to remember everything and non-essentialised memories are understandably discarded”.<sup>495</sup> In this manner, certain events are conveniently distilled and left out of the discourse. The idea of a chosen or collective amnesia in Gukurahundi may encourage coping and coexistence. However, it could be questioned whether there is “collective amnesia” in Zimbabwe, about Gukurahundi – even amongst survivors themselves.

Lastly, the trauma experienced by some of the survivors potentially disrupts their self-identities, scarring so intensely that the discontinued self begins to question their individuality and thus chooses a silence about their experiences. Eppel as well as Ndlovu-Gatsheni make some intriguing observations about how the trauma and the silence of Gukurahundi has contributed to unifying, enhancing, as well as hardening ideas about a Ndebele/Mthwakazi identity – which might not have been so strongly existent in the past.<sup>496</sup>

Some of the ramifications of silence on the Gukurahundi issue are that silence enables “history” and “memories” to become easily forgotten and erased with time, especially if they remain in the oral and are undocumented. Oral memories are subject to modification and histories are ultimately lost. Seemingly, the silence of Gukurahundi impacts one’s engagement with nation-building – where civilians are constantly stifled, passive, or have diminished interest in engaging their citizenry rights. Finally, I posit that silence ultimately means that any attempts at memorialisation of the occurrence are also stifled – as one cannot memorialise that which has not been deemed to exist in the first place. Primo Levi concludes this well when he states that “things whose existence is not morally comprehensible cannot exist”.<sup>497</sup>

Chap. 6 draws attention to the gendered nature of memory-making. Thereafter there is discussion about the spaces or sites within which Gukurahundi memories are housed.

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<sup>494</sup> Buckley-Zistel (2006: 131- 133)

<sup>495</sup> Nandy, “History’s Forgotten Doubles,” 47.

<sup>496</sup> Eppel, “Gukurahundi: the need for Truth”; see Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni, “For the Nation to Live, the Tribe Must Die’: the politics of Ndebele Identity and belonging in Zimbabwe” in Bahru Zewde (ed.), *Society, State and Identity in African History*, (Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies, 2008).

<sup>497</sup> Levi, *Survival in Aushwitz*, 14.

## CHAPTER 6. ABOUT MEMORY (2) – GENDER AND SITES OF MEMORY

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the literature on gender and memory; and attempts to link this theory to participants' memories, as shared, within a gendered lens. Thereafter the discussion draws attention to sites and spaces of memory including – amongst a variety of aspects – geographical memory and other mnemonics, such as the body, as a site of memory.

### 6.2 Gender and Memory

Gender studies represent a cross-disciplinary sphere of intellectual enquiry, with the word gender referring to a state of being masculine/male and feminine/female (even as the latter is often misused synonymously or interchangeably to mean women, to the gross neglect of men).<sup>498</sup> This crude description is typically used with reference to social and cultural differences, more than it is for biological ones. Essentially, the making of a gendered identity is a fluid process which is not exhaustive. In current gender debates, academics and practitioners are no longer content with these binaries and feel that the gender categorisation (as it is a construct) needs to be widened in tandem with ongoing conversations as well as lived realities – as a means to be more inclusive. For example, social and progressive institutions such as Facebook recognise 71 gender categories.

Ntsimane writes about the gendered nature of memory-making, particularly as a researcher working within African contexts. He makes observations about how gender ultimately impacts the interview process, and more significantly, the memories shared. He states that cultural capital and etiquette are essential tools needed to engage this space fully. Cultural etiquette includes addressing aspects as simple as what to wear to an interview; what are considered appropriate greetings amongst men and/or women; as well as where a man or a woman should and can sit in an interview, especially as “in African society space remains gendered”.<sup>499</sup> I am convinced the same could be said by researchers working in other societies outside of Africa as well.

Much of my own interviews were conducted largely in conservative rural areas, amongst participants who are often conventional in their gendered conceptualisation – and so I too had to follow these mores, out of respect, as well as a means to gain the trust of the interviewees. As a

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<sup>498</sup> B. Hamber, “There Is a Crack in Everything: Problematising Masculinities, Peacebuilding and Transitional Justice” *Human Rights Review*, (2015), 12.

<sup>499</sup> Ntsimane, “Why should I tell my Story”, 115.

young black woman in this space, there were many affirmations subtly or overtly made about dressing appropriately; watching the intonation of my voice; and needing males to drive and escort me to interview spaces, as a means to ensure that I remained safe. I realise that these same norms would not have been required had I been a male interviewer.

Without going too much into the details of these interview spaces (as already highlighted in Chap. 3), I was reminded of Ntsimane's words when I often found myself sitting in the kitchen or in the house in general (sometimes on the floor) whenever I spoke with women interviewees; and conversely often sitting outside, under a tree (often on a bench), when I spoke to the male folk. I learnt that women's and men's memories are housed and sometimes found in different spaces. Over and above the kitchen example mentioned above, I found rural women's memories of Gukurahundi out in the fields – where women sing, plough, and do life together, and in the process, discuss political and socio-economic goings-on amongst themselves. Other spaces where these memories were found were at strategic convening spaces such as water-points, which include the riverbank, boreholes, and dams, as well as in spaces of worship. The same could be said of the men I interviewed, who equally took me to their spaces, and therefore where their memories lie. Jonah Dube and I were herding goats, so we walked slowly and talked in the fields, throughout the interview; while Rasta had just finished his shift at the farm and so I met him where he has his evening “drink” in the community.

In urban spaces, the Bulawayo, Cape Town, and Johannesburg interviews were mostly conducted in office spaces or homes (wherever it was convenient for us) – and certainly without any significant differences from a gender perspective.

Naturally, many women participants' memories also emanated from these private spaces which they occupy. This means these memories started within the home – and were spoken through the lens of the family or the greater community, as opposed to individually. Dube highlights a significant character in her research – Thandi Shezi – as constantly placing herself in private spaces. Thandi says:

[E]arlier in the evening, I had had a premonition. It was around 8pm. I was doing the dishes in the kitchen, when I was suddenly gripped with fear.<sup>500</sup>

It is interesting to see that Thandi's memory is located in the private realm of the kitchen – in the home – as well as how she remembers the arrest in tandem with a domestic chore, which she was doing at the time.

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<sup>500</sup> P. Dube. “The Story of Thandi Shezi” in D. Posel and G. Simpson, *Commissioning the Past: Understanding South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2002), 117 - 118

Intriguingly, and according to Hofmeyr, oral storytelling as a skill is taught differently across the genders, with many women being taught to tell stories through the lens of folklore, which can sometimes be fictitious and, in some instances, are encouraged to be so.<sup>501</sup> According to her research, which is context specific to KwaZulu Natal and not necessarily generalisable, men are incidentally discouraged from this type of storytelling and are taught to speak from a historical lens. Throughout her study, she noted that the greatest difference between men's sharing of memory and that of women's had to do with where and how they had variously acquired the skill of oral traditional storytelling.

it became clear that such acquisition had occurred in households strictly divided by gender and that such different gender "spaces" served to differentiate what were, in effect, cognate narrative skills.<sup>502</sup>

Hofmeyr goes on to say that historically, male tellings in South African rural settings were done at the *kraal* or at men's places of gathering, and women's in the proverbial kitchen. She states that migration and movement meant that there were changes in space, which therefore resulted in changes in the oral telling or the sharing of memory – which are gendered. In newer spaces,

new gridded housing systems did away with the kraals for men, and thus their unique gendered spaces of convening ... whilst it did not do away with the kitchen for women – which still existed despite migration.<sup>503</sup>

According to Hofmeyr, men's oral traditional storytelling changed the most in line with a spatiality which now encourages individuality and which was in the past communal, and this has resulted in women becoming the vehicle of orality in communities.<sup>504</sup> It would thus appear, based on these assertions, that there are indeed variant gendered memories – and they are impacted by the socio-historical context of space.

Typical gendered narratives show maternal instincts as personified by women participants who tell the story in the realm of being mothers, wives, daughters, and sisters. Dube highlights Thandi saying:

[M]y cousin Vusi Mdaweni, used paraplegic boots and could not walk or stand without putting them on. And as he had just woken up, he couldn't stand. But they still beat him up. The more he screamed, the more they kicked ...<sup>505</sup>

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<sup>501</sup> I. Hofmeyr, "We Spend Our Years as a Tale That Is Told": Oral Historical Narrative in a South African Chiefdom. *Social History of Africa*. (Portsmouth: Heinemann University Press, 1994). 7.

<sup>502</sup> Hofmeyr, "We Spend our Years", 7

<sup>503</sup> *Ibid.*, 11

<sup>504</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>505</sup> Dube, "Story of Thandi Shezi", 118.

She proceeds to say about her arrest:

[I]t was so bad, so painful for my mother, that she said to the cops, “Do not kill her in front of me. Show me her body when you are finished”.<sup>506</sup>

Interestingly, Thandi herself is also experiencing police brutality at the same time, but she insistently keeps talking about other family members. Indeed these were also my experiences with women participants of the Gukurahundi research. They tended to concern themselves with the family, and the communal even in their narratives.

Furthermore, more than telling stories about themselves, women typically share the experiences of the men and family members around them as a priority.<sup>507</sup> Ntsimane highlights that many African women’s stories are told out of a place of modesty.<sup>508</sup> Thus, the memory-making entails elevating the sons and husbands, over their very own role. I am reminded of the documentary of the Cradock Four, in which the participants initially defaulted to sharing the stories of their partners and children – before their own.<sup>509</sup> Also, Albertina Sisulu at the South African TRC largely spoke about her husband’s activism – much to the neglect of her own.<sup>510</sup> Another example involves Thandi Shezi being arrested, not as an activist in her own right, but rather for her connection as Silver’s “boyfriend”. He was in fact a fellow activist. It never dawned on the police that she herself, at the very site of her arrest in the family home, was in possession of, and hiding, ammunition. In a typical case of gendered thinking, the police could not fathom that she could have been a “trained terrorist”.<sup>511</sup>

I am reminded of an interview in the rural area, where I met MaNcube. She had a very remarkable story of occurrences that happened to her personally, during the Gukurahundi era. However, despite the significance of her first-hand experience, she kept insisting that when her husband was back, perhaps he would be a better person to interview and hear from, as she was ultimately a wife at the end of the day. Incidentally, whilst I eventually got to hear his side of the story, I equally found her telling to be uniquely her own, intriguing, well-articulated, and insightful. Ntsimane through his fieldwork found that in many African spaces, being a man is a position of superiority and leadership, as opposed to being a woman. The “women, especially if they are not

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<sup>506</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>507</sup> F. Ross, “Bearing Witness, Women and the Truth and the Reconciliation Commission”. (London: Pluto Press, 2003), 89.

<sup>508</sup> Ntsimane, “Why should I tell my Story”, 120.

<sup>509</sup> *We tell our stories the way we like: The wives of the Cradock Four*, Directed by L. Van Vuuren, G. Parker, and Da Canha, T (1999, Department of Historical Studies, University of Cape Town), DVD.

<sup>510</sup> A. Durbach, “Towards Reparative Transformation: Revisiting the Impact of Violence against Women in a Post-TRC South Africa”, *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 10, 3(2016).

<sup>511</sup> Dube, “Story of Thandi Shezi”, 118.

married, are equated to children”.<sup>512</sup> Additionally, he insists that women tend to accept this as the norm, and do not always challenge such assumptions.

Olckers asserts that one of the reasons women do not share their stories, in comparison to male counterparts, is because they have typically not been given a space in the public domain to speak, seemingly confined to the private sphere.<sup>513</sup> According to Durbach, the South African TRC attempted to remedy such a situation (albeit as an afterthought) through its Special Women’s Hearings, which would give multiple women opportunities to share their testimonies, in what was seen as a progressive move at the time, considering that the TRC was not initially a women-sensitive space. Unfortunately, only a very small number of women came forward to testify for several reasons. Durbach notes that these reasons included: lack of proximity from the rural areas, which required travel arrangements to main cities; the languaging and the TRC lexicon or narrative, which excluded them from the conversation; along with the reality that many women felt that their experiences of sexual violation and thus testimonies of rape by fellow ANC liberation cadre members, in the camps or in exile, made them disloyal to the movement.<sup>514</sup>

In the interview process, one participant – Mthombeni – ardently insisted that he would not hold a joint interview with his wife, MaMpofu, who was also presiding in the room; but rather preferred that they each told their stories in separate sittings. MaMpofu, on the other hand, tried to insist on being there, proclaiming that Mthombeni had never fully articulated his experience of Bhalagwe to her, and that she wanted for the first time – in over 35 years – to hear it and to understand. I refused to interview them simultaneously, as I believe one-on-one sessions encourage confidentiality, and noted the relief on Mthombeni’s face when his wife MaMpofu walked away. She later told me that his silence over the matter is difficult for her. He conversely articulated that he does not want her to see his pain and vulnerability, as well as his shame at the powerlessness, that Gukurahundi left him with. He cried inconsolably throughout his session. However, he remained steadfast that he was not willing to let his wife see him in that state.

By default, Mthombeni and MaMpofu are articulating their memories within their gendered lens – where women are allowed, in fact are expected, to weep, be emotional, disjointed, etc. as they share their stories; whilst men are expected to have a more collected exterior, without the emotional vestiges, as part of the performance of their masculinity. This is rather unfortunate really, especially if the articulation of Mthombeni’s pain is in his tears, which he ought to be able

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<sup>512</sup> Ntsimane, “Why should I tell my Story”, 118.

<sup>513</sup> Olckers, I. Gender-neutral truth – a reality shamefully distorted. *Agenda* 31. 1996, 54.

<sup>514</sup> Durbach, “Towards Reparative Transformation”, 370 – 371.



to shed, whether he is gendered as masculine or feminine.

Additionally, putting women and children in a box of vulnerability is an erroneous way of assuming gendered memories are made. Women are treated homogeneously, often seen as victims of war, and usually left in need of protection, in the absence of their male providers (i.e. sons and husbands).

Women are seen as victims and never the protagonists of violence. These conceptualisations mean that there are myriads of alternative women's stories or memories which are neglected. Bradford has "extended and challenged some of these analyses about participation suggesting that war cannot be characterized as a man's war, since women are not always the passive victims portrayed in historiographies".<sup>515</sup> For example, many interviews in the Gukurahundi case study speak of women as having had a huge responsibility in the deaths of people at the hand of the Gukurahundi army. Many of them were girlfriends and/or information carriers. Indeed, some may have been forced or threatened into this role, but many others may have done it willingly, as a way of survival, and even as a way of wielding power in the communities about who was going to die, and who was going to live. MaNcube states:

I think women played a dangerous role in Gukurahundi in this regard, and sometimes contributed towards people losing their lives".<sup>516</sup>

Admittedly, MaNcube has generalised "all women" as being dangerous; and to an extent, unfairly holds them responsible for their experiences, which were sometimes out of their control.

Brian Nyathi shares the following:

It started when fifth brigade soldiers took away our next door neighbour's wife to use as a girlfriend. After some time, the wife returned back home. I think they had a quarrel ... so she ran back to people whom I think she considered her friends [i.e. the Gukurahundi soldiers] and told them that "my husband has been hitting me because why did I go with you guys". So she came back with the Fifth Brigade who came and collected him. On my way to school, I saw him tied up and bleeding. That was the last time I saw him.<sup>517</sup>

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<sup>515</sup> Witz, L., Minkley, G and Rassool, C. 2017. No End of a [History] Lesson : Preparations for the Anglo-Boer War Centenary Commemoration, 167.

<sup>516</sup> MaNcube, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>517</sup> Brian Nyathi, November 2015. Interviewed in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The idea here is that not all men are aggressors, as not all women and children are vulnerable or victims, as in the one-sided stories and therefore memories which are often promulgated – rather, many men lost their lives through Gukurahundi. They were victims too.

Indeed, Gukurahundi in its very nature was gendered because it was seeking to kill mostly the boys, young men, and elders.<sup>518</sup> Women were affected differently in stereotypical gendered norms, at the hands of the army who told them “you are a mother, daughter or wife of a dissident, and therefore you must be punished”<sup>519</sup>. Also, many women suffered the emotional consequences of having to deal with the death of their loved ones, living through their own ordeal, and yet, amidst everything, single-handedly becoming financial providers of families.

Gendered debates tend to revolve around sexual and gender-based violence as the most important issue, creating in the process “a gendered hierarchy of suffering”, while not paying attention particularly to the ongoing realities of the post-conflict environment. “A single focus on sexual violence committed by men can conceal the realities of daily life for women, which include domestic violence, and the lack of property and inheritance rights”, limited healthcare and educational opportunities, as well as systemic poverty, among many other issues.<sup>520</sup> The SGBV discourse and simplistic polarisation universally asserts that women are victims of rape and other sexualised torture, and states that men are perpetrators of such.<sup>521</sup> The narrative on SGBV, whilst significant, limits other aspects of the gender and memory discourse.

In the work of the South African TRC, gendered issues were categorised as “ordinary violence” or private matters (i.e. a criminal act), but not committed by perpetrators as a political objective.<sup>522</sup> Gender, as addressed through the socio-economic rights category, is subsumed into the development discourse, and therefore it has often been set apart from political and civil crimes.<sup>523</sup> SGBV matters thus do not have the same deterrents as those associated with political crimes. Hence, according to Durbach, the TRC failed to recognise rape as a weapon of war, and this violence as a form of communication. She argues that the normalisation of this issue by the TRC continues to heighten and enhance recurrent gender disparities and SGBV in South Africa, despite

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<sup>518</sup> Shari Eppel, “‘Gukurahundi’: the need for truth and reparation”

<sup>519</sup> MaNcube, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>520</sup> Hamber, “There is a Crack in Everything”, 16. Eriksson, Bass & Stern, 2010 in Hamber, 2015:16

<sup>521</sup> H. Scanlon, “Militarization, Gender and Transitional Justice in Africa” in *Militarism, Conflict and Women’s Activism. Feminist Africa*. 10. (2008).

<sup>522</sup> Durbach, “Towards Reparative Transformation”, 370.

<sup>523</sup> L. Arbour, ‘Economic and Social Justice for Societies in Transition [comments]’, *New York University Journal of International Law and Politics*, 1, (2007).

the country's all-encompassing Constitution as well as other policies that have been put into place.<sup>524</sup> In a similar vein, the 2013 Zimbabwean Constitution is very progressive and is aligned to several key international and regional gender equality and women's instruments, which Zimbabwe has signed and ratified.<sup>525</sup> Rape, for example, whilst viewed as a sexual crime in the case of women, is intended to bring shame and to highlight a conquering.<sup>526</sup> During the apartheid era, sexual violence, for instance, was used as a tool or a tactic by police and prison personnel to control, humiliate, and silence female activists.<sup>527</sup>

Whoever said that raping a woman is the power men use to destroy her soul, was right. Within minutes, I was destroyed. My womanhood was taken.<sup>528</sup>

From a gendered perspective, the "rape" of men is, first, under-reported; and second – strangely at that – not referred to as sexual crimes or even "rape", but rather as a political crime. It is meant to demasculate and cause the men to feel feminised. It is interesting to see how the same ordeal, perceived as a sexual crime for a woman, is categorised as a political crime for a man.

Within the Gukurahundi context, countless women – both interviewed and not – were raped. The normative nature of doing this was a way to punish the men through the women and children (i.e. for being fathers, husbands, and sons who were dissidents). It was also used as a torture mechanism for women and children. Again, the men in this study do not mention rape as having occurred to them, and I do not know if this is indeed true – or rather that the stigma of being associated with such, is deemed to be worth the silence of this occurrence.

In the interviews, there were clear discrepancies in the way that men and women spoke about rape. Men generally used the English term "rape" to speak about it or else referred to it in the vernacular isiNdebele word *ukubhinya* (I am not sure what the literal translation for this word is), when sharing about the sexual torture which the girls and women from their communities experienced. I found it used in a generalised, brazen, and a matter of fact way. Not insensitively, but rather stated as it was, i.e. that it was rape. However, I found that women used other words to communicate this pain. The word rape and *ukubhinya* were rarely used. Words spoken in isiNdebele to express this included *ukudlwengula* (harassed?), or phrases such as *ukubamba indwangu* (holding or catching a monkey?), or ideas such as *wangizwisa ubuhlungu* (he brought

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<sup>524</sup> Durbach, "Towards Reparative Transformation", 367.

<sup>525</sup> Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No.20) Act. 2013. [www.parlzim.gov.zw](http://www.parlzim.gov.zw)

<sup>526</sup> Goldblatt, B. and Meintjies, S. South African Women Demand the Truth. M. Tursen and C. Twagiramariya (eds.) *What Women Do in Wartime*. London: Zed Books. 1998, 32.

<sup>527</sup> Durbach, "Towards Reparative Transformation", 370.

<sup>528</sup> Dube, "Story of Thandi Shezi", 121.

me pain). Additionally, many women participants in the research actually chose not to use any words at all when sharing their stories, but rather left silences for the listener. Mama ka Zonda states that the soldiers arrived and said:

You, come here! ... lie down over there ... and then later my baby was born.<sup>529</sup>

Mama ka Zonda leaves the story to conjecture.

### 6.3 The Sites and Spaces of Memory

The example of sexual violation highlighted above begins to draw on the idea of the body as a site of memory in itself. This expands the domain of rape to more than just mental or psychological memory-making, to includes memories experienced through the physical. The idea of the body, as a site of memory, is a very real concept, and authors such as Field use the following example as evidence of this.

While describing the night he [John Patrick Field] was manacled by the military police and pushed into a cell, he pointed to his forearms and said “Look you can still see the white scars on my arms”.<sup>530</sup>

At this, the author marvels that in summer, these stark white lines – scars left by handcuffs – across each of his forearms, are marks that he had always seen growing up as a child; and that “the sudden link between the story and the marks on his arms caught me off guard. Here was historical experience cut onto his body, leaving scars to remind him of that night”.<sup>531</sup>

Indeed in the case of Gukurahundi, there are notable examples of bodies that remain strong representations of how these physical manifestations on the person might or might not be linked to violence and its possible legacy of trauma.

Highlighted below are a few examples emanating from the research fieldwork:

In the middle of an interview with Gogo MaMoyo in her home, and very much at her own insistence, she removed her clothing, to show me two bullet hole scars from when she had been shot, and which remain as evidence of Gukurahundi on her body to date. As a result of this, she lives with a “disability” or some physical challenges, which all bear testimony of how Gukurahundi scarred her. She insisted that I take pictures of the bullet holes and use them as part

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<sup>529</sup> MaNcube, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>530</sup> S. Field, “‘Shooting at Shadows’: Private John Field, War Stories and Why He Would Not Be Interviewed”, *Oral History* 41. No.2 Autumn (2013), 83.

<sup>531</sup> Field, “Shooting at Shadows”, 83.

of this important research. She highlighted that they were a daily reminder of her pain. In the midst of government denials and silencing, as well as the politics surrounding its memory, her unofficial history – Gogo MaMoyo’s reality and experience – is found on her person.

Also carried in/on the body, interview participants such as Mama ka Zonda had children born to them as a result of rape. Many of them acquiesce to also having contracted sexually-transmitted diseases (STDs) in this manner. Mama ka Zonda named her son Zonda, to express how enraged this whole ordeal left her. Zonda is therefore a site of memory for his mother. During the interviews, other sites of memory included head wounds, bayoneted limbs, severed arms, etc. These all alter the quality of life for the survivors. But, more important, they have become permanent sites of memory.

Over and above the body being a site of memory, there are many other spaces in which memory can exist. In their introduction chapter, Antze and Lambek give a few examples of these sites of memory, or spaces of memory, which include photographic evidence and personal artefacts; and even the role that scientific psychoanalysis techniques such as hypnosis, lie detector tests, and brain scans, can have in telling us about where these sites of memory reside. These sites are “symbols, codes, artefacts, rites in which memory is embodied and objectified; the coherence of the narratives, rituals, geographies, or even epistemologies”.<sup>532</sup>

Field states that “we situate what we recollect within the mental spaces ... no collective memory can exist without reference to a socially specific spatial framework;<sup>533</sup> and further gives credence to these assertions when drawing lessons from Langa – Cape Town’s oldest suburb as created in terms of the 1923 Urban Areas Act – noting:

the memories of earlier Langa generations refer to various experiences of subjugation and resistance, which they have imaginatively reconstructed around sites of memory such as public spaces (e.g., the pass office), physical objects (e.g., the identity book), and collective actions (e.g., the Langa Marches).<sup>534</sup>

Hofmeyr refers to sites like these as mnemonic archives where spaces begin to shape memory.<sup>535</sup> In this same vein, Alexander highlights not only that land itself is more than a site of memory, but also that the land has a memory and therefore goes through changes, when incidents of harm to

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<sup>532</sup> Antze and Lambek, *Tense Past: Cultural Essays*, xvii.

<sup>533</sup> S. Field, “Imagining Communities: Memory, Loss and Resilience in Post-Apartheid Cape Town” in P. Robert and A. Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, (New York: Routledge, 2015), 584.

<sup>534</sup> Field, “Imagining Communities”, 584.

<sup>535</sup> Hofmeyr, “We Spend our Years”

the land (e.g., through bloodshed) are irreversible. Alexander also states that people have an emotional attachment to land because of the memory it carries.<sup>536</sup>

In speaking about memory spaces of Gukurahundi, a large number of research participants highlighted the following examples:

*Bones, burial sites, and reburials as memory spaces.* Bhalagwe mine has become a significant memory space, as a large number of Gukurahundi killings were hidden by burial in the mine. Whilst not commemorated or marked in any real way officially (except, at some point, by a heavily guarded army presence), many people know what it represents, and it remains a memory site. Indeed, people still live locally amongst these graves and remains. Whilst this gloomy example is by no means unique, pupils at St Paul's Secondary School in Lupane, for instance, in October 2011 (25 years later), stumbled on human bones, which had risen to the surface – in the middle of a football practice.<sup>537</sup> These bones turned out to be remnants of a Gukurahundi gravesite housing up to 60 people. Koff and Eppel write in detail about digging up mass graves, bones, and reburials along with the emotional impacts of such actions.<sup>538</sup>

*Schools and hospitals as proliferate memory sites.* When soldiers took over an establishment, camped, and held meetings, etc., this was oftentimes a school. For Sis' Siphoshe, a school building is a constant site of memory, especially as a despondent reminder of the educational opportunities, which she never had after her parents had been burned in the homestead in her sight, and the schools shut down indefinitely. For Gogo MaMoyo, her site is not a school per se, but rather the sight, smell, and presence of clinics and hospitals, as these remind her of seven months tenure there after being shot.

*Army fatigues* (both those which was worn by the Fifth Brigade, as well as any general army soldier today) are memory reactors. MaNcube highlights that till today, 33 years later, the sight of a soldier in army fatigues disarms her, and her first inclination is to flee.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni highlights *the memory spaces which the Internet has created for many second-*

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<sup>536</sup> Gregory Alexander, "The Complexities of Land Reparations" *Law and Social Inquiry* 39, 4 (2014).

<sup>537</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/oct/05/mass-grave-found-zimbabwe-school>. 5 October 2011.

<sup>538</sup> C. Koff, *The Bone Woman : a Forensic Anthropologist's Search for Truth in the Mass Graves of Rwanda, Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo* (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2006); S. Eppel, "Healing the dead": exhumation and reburials as truth telling and reclaiming the past in rural Zimbabwe in "Telling the Truths: Truth Telling and Peace Building in Post Conflict Societies. (University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana, 2006).

*generation Zimbabweans* affected by Gukurahundi, and living, mostly in the diaspora.<sup>539</sup> Enhanced access to the Internet means that a global community can have a virtual memory space uniting them, in what is a unifying identity.

A lot of memory does not need words as its articulation. It can be expressed in a variety of other ways. Field uses the example of “war-time sights, smells and sounds, again and again” when describing the sensory states of memory-making which his father often could not articulate, but which are a central aspect of his remembrance.<sup>540</sup> Additionally, Gogo MaMoyo does not ever speak about being shot twice, but rather tells it by making the sound. “I just heard dhu ... dhu twice. And I fell”.<sup>541</sup>

All of the examples above are referred to as sites of memory or memory spaces, because they represent “a monument visited, rather than a context, a landscape inhabited. The ruins of memory are subject to the restoration and we all become the alienated tourists of our pasts”.<sup>542</sup>

From the examples above, there is clear indication that some memories have strong connections to their geographical or spatial sites.

Field buttresses how physical sites in Langa and District Six in South Africa were, and remain as, spaces which evoke memory-making.<sup>543</sup> For instance, migrant hostels and barracks, a pass office as well as a site, today known as Robert Sobukwe Square – which remain standing – all bear witness in Langa today, and are constant reminders (particularly to the older generation) of the memory of living under apartheid, as well as in an era when a “dompass” determined one’s survival. It is also a reminder of uprisings and lives lost, all in a pursuit to be free.

As can be expected, Gukurahundi also brings many ideas of spatiality to the fore.

In the past, Gukurahundi has often been confined to the realm of the Matabelelands and Midlands provinces. As a result, this has done one of two things, both equally damaging.

First, the easily delineable spatial, ethnic, and political identity of these massacres means that

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<sup>539</sup> Ndlovu-Gatsheni, “For the Nation to Live”.

<sup>540</sup> Field, “Shooting at Shadows”, 78.

<sup>541</sup> Gogo MaMoyo, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>542</sup> Antze and Lambek, *Tense Past: Cultural Essays*, xiii.

<sup>543</sup> Field, “Imagining Communities”, 584.

there is generally an ownership of the Gukurahundi memory – even if it is a painful and a traumatic memory. To put it crudely, “Ndebeles”; ZAPU and ZPRA members; as well as persons from the Matabelelands and Midlands provinces are likely to own, or else be territorial about, Gukurahundi memory. This leads to a case of “us” and “them”, and insiders vs. outsiders with regard to this memory. Regional ownership of the memory has meant that the Gukurahundi massacres struggle to be accepted in the national arena. And yet, it is a national issue, which should be dealt with nationally if it is to contribute to the nation-building, reconciliation, justice, and wider peace and security agenda. Gukurahundi is simultaneously and sometimes referred to as “the Matabeleland problem”, and it is a widely-used term amongst academics and in national discourses. Hodder-Williams and other authors have given legitimacy to this term. Calling it the Matabeleland problem, on the positive side, draws attention to some of the issues in the region, which may have otherwise stayed under the radar or gone unnoticed. Conversely, on the negative side, calling it so means that it can be confined to being a domain falling outside of the national arena, and be seen rather as a regional matter, and not be given a space in the collective memory of the nation. In this regard, and crucially, it is a form of a “state of denial”.

Over and above being a regional memory, Gukurahundi has acquired variant urban and rural memories, where a seemingly “more authentic” memory of the genocide has been erroneously associated with the rural areas. As discussed in earlier chapters, many survivors of Gukurahundi experienced this in their rural domain. However, this does not mean that an urban side of the Gukurahundi story does not exist.<sup>544</sup> Zwelibanzi Malinga highlighted that growing up in the urban city of Bulawayo, he was witness to initial Gukurahundi army raids; house searches and disappearances; as well as the cordoning off of spaces such as Mpopoma Township at the inception of Gukurahundi – which eventually moved out to the rural areas.

The issue with delineating memories to spaces is that memories themselves are fluid. They move. Sometimes through people, and also in many other ways. Many of these Gukurahundi persons may no longer reside in these places physically. Characteristic of Gukurahundi, as highlighted by academics and by participants in the research, was the mass movement (or displacement) of people and communities. The largest pattern of movements recorded are naturally associated with rural to urban spaces, as a means to escape Gukurahundi. What becomes interesting then is the divergent memories that participants hold of Gukurahundi – especially when they tell the story away from the geographical site of occurrence; as opposed to those who share their memories whilst still living within the site of memory. For example, many Zimbabweans have

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<sup>544</sup> Auret, *From Liberator to Dictator*, 121-122.



moved across borders into neighbouring countries such as South Africa and Botswana, as well as further afield to the United Kingdom.<sup>545</sup> Every time these memories move (through people and in other ways), they take on a different characteristic. Intriguingly, the memories tend to take on the shape of the space in which they are located. For example, someone located in a democracy or an advocacy space will want justice for this memory. Someone located in a reconciliatory space will advocate for healing through peace. Those residing in a space of silence (for example, some Zimbabweans living in the country) tell a memory of silence. The various spaces and sites of memory thus allow memory to make different meanings.

Of significance is the idea highlighted by Field – when making observations about District Six in South Africa, but which hold relevance for the Gukurahundi displacements – is that:

displacement was not solely about the removal of people from physical houses and spaces. It was also about the loss of emotionally and symbolically meaningful places, particularly “home” and “community”. The impact of these losses is enormous: these were the places where people played, worked, and lived and that were central to their development from children to adults. Within the familiar landscape of home, neighbourhood, and the city, people felt connected.<sup>546</sup>

The author asserts that the loss of home and community is a loss of personal security, stability, and autonomy, from which most victims never seem to be able to recover. There is a partial recovery which can occur in the aftermath of such occurrences, and it is likely that a full recovery or full healing never really happens.

In this regard, we see interview participants such as Gogo MaMoyo highlighting that 20 years after her shooting at the hand of the Gukurahundi army – i.e. in 2003 – she attempted to return to Lupane, because that is where her home, family, and community life were prior to Gukurahundi. It is also the site where her husband is buried. According to MaMoyo, 20 years of life in a cramped house in the urban city of Bulawayo never felt like home to her, and she found she had no attachment to the place – but rather nursed a nostalgic hankering for her past life. She eventually returned to the village in 2003. However, and rather unfortunately so, her memory of Lupane as she found it, as well as the social, economic, and political dynamics of the landscape and the people, had changed drastically, such that she was unable to reintegrate into the space. She eventually returned to her cramped house in a Bulawayo township – where she still resides today. Seemingly, this evinces Field’s idea that oftentimes, memories of place are overly idealised

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<sup>545</sup> Zimbabwe National Statistics [www.zimstat.co.zw](http://www.zimstat.co.zw)

<sup>546</sup> Field, “Imagining Communities”, 586.

as a means to “bear the present”.<sup>547</sup> Field highlights that this romanticised reconstruction of a lost space points towards a resilience, and it reveals a resolve to imagine a better future.

Another example includes Sis’ Siphio (also living in urban Bulawayo), who constantly makes a pilgrimage back to her site of memory.<sup>548</sup> Because of the plundering, burning, and abandonment of many of these places, she concurs that the landscape of this already expansive geographical site has changed over the years. Additionally, the people who made up the community are no longer there. In her interview, she highlights that she often returns to the site of memory – which she does not remember fully, but to which she returns all the same – because she is in a continual search for her young brother’s bones which she and other children buried in a shallow grave in the wilderness after he died. However, 33 years later, she no longer remembers where this site is; and hence continues to go back to the area, with the hopes that finding the body (or bones) will give her some kind of healing. So whilst she is in the urban area, she has not left the rural space or her site of memory behind.

Conclusively, gender and space are central to memory in the continued practices of remembering/forgetting, as well as narrating/not narrating.

The next chapter offers an in-depth examination of intergenerational memories. The theory of intergenerational memories is discussed and thereafter analysed against research gleanings from participants.

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<sup>547</sup> Field, “Imagining Communities”, 584.

<sup>548</sup> Sis’ Siphio, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

## CHAPTER 7. ABOUT MEMORY (3) – INTERGENERATIONAL MEMORIES

### 7.1 Introduction

A key tenet of this chapter is to highlight, and where possible draw attention to debates about the existence of family and historical generations – and whether this impacts the way that memories of Gukurahundi are retold and experienced. Whilst this is not a comparative study between the first and the second generation, the nexus between them both will be highlighted – where possible. Additionally, within the chapter, the concept or normativity of the use of concepts such as the first and second generations is problematised – through counter theory. The chapter will then turn attention, not contrary to the first/second generation debates, but will introduce the idea of the 1.5 generation – essentially as a cohort of people that were present, and experienced Gukurahundi as children. Lastly, I will discuss and focus analysis on ideas and experiences of intergenerational memories as highlighted by the participants of the study, in tandem with the theory.

### 7.2 Discussing the Concept of First and Second Generations

The concept of first, second, and third generations are ideas which were most popularised with literature emanating out of the Holocaust experience, and are now applied globally as a recognised trajectory in memory studies.<sup>549</sup> Rowland-Klein and Dunlop, amongst other authors, attempt to speak about the first generation and consider them to be survivors who live through massive psychic trauma, experienced as a result of a violation (in this specific case – Hitler’s Final Solution).<sup>550</sup> The authors thus emphasise the physical and emotional scars, which the first generation carries long after the occurrence. Several symptoms are associated with the first generation to include, but are not limited to

cognitive and memory disturbances, depression and survivor guilt, chronic anxiety related to fear of renewed persecution and phobic fears. There are frequently sleep disturbances and psychosomatic manifestations.<sup>551</sup>

Indeed, it is common knowledge that there are no homogenous characteristics with any generation, as trauma is experienced and expressed differently. However, authors such as Sharf

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<sup>549</sup> Marianne Hirsch, “The Generation of Postmemory”, *Poetics Today* 29, no. 1. (2008); and Miri Scharf, “Long-term effects of trauma: Psychological functioning of the second and third generation of Holocaust Survivors”, *Development and Psychopathology* 19, no. 2 (2007).

<sup>550</sup> Dani Rowland-Klein and Rosemary Dunlop, “The transmission of trauma across generations: identification with parental trauma in children of Holocaust survivors”, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 32, no. 3 (1998), 359.

<sup>551</sup> *Ibid.*

found in their cognitive study that there can be generalisable attributes and traits experienced by a generation cohort that has undergone trauma, simultaneously.<sup>552</sup> Thus, Sharf's findings based on her longitudinal study has similar characteristics to those highlighted by Rowland-Klein and Dunlop.<sup>553</sup> A most notable observation, common to these authors is around the distinct parenting style of first generation survivors – which is usually over protective and smothering. Rowland-Klein and Dunlop additionally highlight a parenting style riddled with fear, and mistrust as well as a lack of communication.<sup>554</sup> In tandem, Field – who shares personal observations about growing up with a father who survived World War II – experienced his father's parenting track record as complex because his “moody, often depressed, emotionally detached father would come alive and appear stronger when he told us his war stories”.<sup>555</sup> Common to all survivor offspring is that they pick up on these silences, and their parents' pre-occupation – and it alters them for the duration of their lives.

Suleiman speaks of the founding conceptualisations of the second generation as those that are seen as succeeding the first generation – and thus were children of Jewish survivors of the Holocaust, born in the immediate years after the war.<sup>556</sup> It is for this generation that Hirsch popularised the term post-memory, which has become common terminology in intergenerational discourses.<sup>557</sup> This is the generation that threads together or links the generational distance, bearing the personal, collective and cultural trauma of those before them – and yet remembering and experiencing this in a way that seems to constitute their own memories in their own right.<sup>558</sup> This generation lives a simultaneous double existence – also referred to as “transposition” – where they exist, switching in and out of their current world, along with their parents' world, in a very real way.<sup>559</sup> This sometimes manifests in these survivor offspring vividly reliving their parents' experiences with tangible symptoms and pain.<sup>560</sup>

In concert, authors such as Field evince the pivotal existence and role of a second generation, as

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<sup>552</sup> Miri Scharf, “Long-term effects of trauma: Psychological functioning of the second and third generation of Holocaust Survivors”, *Development and Psychopathology* 19, no. 2 (2007).

<sup>553</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>554</sup> Rowland-Klein & Dunlop, “The transmission of trauma across generations...” (1998), 360, 364 & 369.

<sup>555</sup> Sean Field, “‘Shooting at Shadows’: Private John Field, War Stories and Why He Would Not Be Interviewed”, *Oral History*, Autumn (2013), 82.

<sup>556</sup> Susan Rubin Suleiman, “The 1.5 Generation: Thinking About Child Survivors and the Holocaust”, *American Imago* 59, no. 3 (2002).

<sup>557</sup> Marianne Hirsch, “The Generation of Postmemory”, *Poetics Today* 29, no. 1. (2008). The term post memory was first phrased by Marianne Hirsch in an article on Art Spiegelman's *Maus* in the early 1990's. She has continually defined it over the years.

<sup>558</sup> Marianne Hirsch, “The Generation of Postmemory”, (2008), 107.

<sup>559</sup> Dani Rowland-Klein and Rosemary Dunlop, “The transmission of trauma across generations: identification with parental trauma in children of Holocaust survivors”, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 32, no. 3 (1998), 360, 364.

<sup>560</sup> Rowland and Dunlop, “*the Transmission of Trauma*”, 359.

he self-identifies as such.<sup>561</sup> Field asserts that children of survivors are often the generation who consciously or unconsciously take on the labor of making sense of what happened in their parent's past, what emotionally remains in the present, and what is carried forward to future generations.<sup>562</sup>

Seemingly, any research focusing on memory and trauma must therefore highlight the importance of intergenerational legacies where violence has occurred. Gukurahundi is therefore not exempt.

Considering that Gukurahundi occurred in 1982–1987 (over 33 years ago), the most accessible cohorts in this intergenerational debate would be the first and the second generation at this stage. The third generation is still possibly too young to be included as a generation of study at this stage – as they are children. However, the second-generation children of Gukurahundi are now very much in their prime – and interestingly enough are at the forefront of current Gukurahundi debates where they are asking questions and searching for answers.

At the writing of this PhD, there has been a clear mushrooming of next generation academics as well as social advocates, many of whom have not experienced Gukurahundi – all beginning to research on it and talk about it, as seen in the surprising number of PhDs and novels focused on Gukurahundi written in the last few years. A most recent example – out of many – is Novuyo Rose Tshuma's *House of Stone*, published in 2018.<sup>563</sup> According to Hirsch, this generation bases their stance largely on stories they heard, images as well as behaviours around them.<sup>564</sup> These behaviours could thus be political, social and economic. Additionally, the second generation are constantly struggling with the tension of “what they heard” and “what is not heard/spoken to them”. Rowland-Klein and Dunlop also assert that this generation is known to manifest physical and emotional symptoms of pain, even without the knowledge of where the trauma comes from.<sup>565</sup> In Zimbabwe, this generation (although not the sole connoisseurs nor advocates of Gukurahundi) currently insists and calls for Gukurahundi to be brought back to the domain, where it once was a silenced topic. Daily newspaper articles have opinion pieces on the topic en masse, along with a bevy of online networks and communities all formed around demanding information about Gukurahundi. For instance, Ndlovu-Gatsheni's discussion on the Internet and

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<sup>561</sup> Sean Field, “Loose Bits of Shrapnel: War Stories, Photographs, and the Peculiarities of Postmemory”, *The Oral History Review* 41, no. 1 (2014).

<sup>562</sup> *Ibid.*, 108-109.

<sup>563</sup> Tshuma, N.R. 2018. *House of Stone*. Atlantic Books. isbn: 1786493624

<sup>564</sup> Marianne Hirsch, “The Generation of Postmemory”, *Poetics Today* 29, no. 1. (2008), 106.

<sup>565</sup> Dani Rowland-Klein and Rosemary Dunlop, “The transmission of trauma across generations: identification with parental trauma in children of Holocaust survivors”, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 32, no. 3 (1998), 1998: 360.

the Mthwakazi Republic is an example of online networks driven by social media in this regard.<sup>566</sup>

In similar vein, recent RMF/FMF advocacy in South Africa is mostly spear headed by second-generation students with many born after 1994, and those that are not, were likely children during apartheid and thus have no recollection of it.<sup>567</sup> Their passed down memory is associated with liberation songs, dances, and mantras. Despite the difference in time period, the first and second generation share the same site of memory and pain – for example, when they sing the same Solomon Mahlangu song. However, the song may represent two variant advocacy focuses depending on the need at the time. Seemingly, the song aides the life of the memory and is the transposition between the past and the present. Music is thus a site of the memory.

Field highlights an important lesson when speaking about intergenerationality.<sup>568</sup> He notes that the same sites of museum memories which are Langa and the District Six, whilst spaces of memory for the older generation, may not necessarily hold the same relevance nor carry the same memory for the second and third generations, in the same way that it did for those who experienced apartheid (the first generation). This is similar to the earlier point made of the Solomon Mahlangu protest song. Alternatively, that same site can mean something totally different intergenerationally.

For the later generations, the focus of memory [in these same Langa sites] is the racialised boundary.<sup>569</sup>

The example of Langa is that the site represented the creation of racial zoning for black Africans, in 1927, as a result of post-apartheid legacies amongst the first generation. The author highlights that in the 1976 era, the resistance of the youth (next generation) in this same site was not around systems of pass laws per se, as much as it was now about radicalised spaces, and reduced access to education.

Garuba thus notes that in the present, the object may be the “same” but the discourse that frames it reproduces it in this scene as a representation of itself in the past. This discourse of representational identity and memory is constructed as part of a signifying process.<sup>570</sup>

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<sup>566</sup> Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni, “‘For the Nation to Live, the Tribe Must Die’: the politics of Ndebele Identity and belonging in Zimbabwe” in Bahru Zewde (ed.), *Society, State and Identity in African History*, (Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies, 2008).

<sup>567</sup> Gillian Godsell and Rekgotsofetse Chikane, “The Roots of Revolution” in Susan Booysen (ed.), *Fees Must Fall: Student Revolt, Decolonisation and Governance in South Africa*, (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2017).

<sup>568</sup> Sean Field, “Imagining Communities: Memory, Loss and Resilience in Post-Apartheid Cape Town” in Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader*, 3rd ed (New York: Routledge, 2015).

<sup>569</sup> Ibid, 584.

<sup>570</sup> Harry Garuba, “A Second Life: Museums, Mimesis, and the Narratives of the Tour Guides of Robben Island” in Noëleen Murray, Nick Shepherd and Martin Hall (eds.), *Desire Lines: Space, Memory and Identity in the post-apartheid city*, (London: Routledge, 2007), 133.

Indeed the first generation's activism or resistance during the new Zimbabwe of 1980 (to include the Gukurahundi years), along with their memory, differs from the activism of the second generation today, in an era of human rights and amidst socio-economic realities 33 years later. The site of memory remains the same, i.e. Gukurahundi, but the responses, articulation, and stances intergenerationally can differ greatly.

Where the second generation specifically is concerned, often terms such as "the generation whose common experience is shared out of belatedness";<sup>571</sup> a generation born with symptoms of trauma; or a generation whose "inherited" memories (and subsequent trauma) have been gleaned as a result of transference of memory abound.<sup>572</sup> A closer look at this idea of the transference of memory is discussed by Wiseman, Metzl, and Barber who state that:

it is our contention that the familial communication of trauma forms the context for understanding the dynamics involved in the emotional experiences of second-generation Holocaust survivors.<sup>573</sup>

Thus emphasising that trauma and memories are transposed through the familial lineage, in the same way that a legacy or a family heirloom is passed down. According to Hirsch, "the family is a privilege site of memorial transmission".<sup>574</sup> However, this theory does not elaborate on the form in which this transference occurs i.e. is it scientific, social, mental, economical, etc.? I question whether this memory is in the bloodline of the second generation, but authors such as Rowland-Klein and Dunlop would argue that this transmission is in the DNA (pathology) of offspring, and even has physical manifestation.<sup>575</sup> I am sceptical about the DNA argument. Whilst it might have some relevance to understanding "transmission" it signifies a return to an essentialist, ahistorical way of explaining difficult emotions, problems, etc.

Some of the shortcomings with the theories of transmission and transference of memory are that they are linear. Memory can be experienced and passed along symbiotically amongst generations. The blueprint trajectory should not always be a passing from the older to the younger; or from the first generation to the second. In memory studies this can cyclically happen in the opposite, with a younger person equally able to share a memory with an older, or a young person sharing

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<sup>571</sup> Susan Rubin Suleiman, "The 1.5 Generation: Thinking About Child Survivors and the Holocaust", *American Imago* 59, no. 3 (2002), 177.

<sup>572</sup> Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory", *Poetics Today* 29, no. 1. (2008), 107

<sup>573</sup> Hadas Wiseman, Einat Metzl and Jacques P. Barber, "Anger, guilt, and Intergenerational Communication of Trauma in the Interpersonal narratives of Second Generation Holocaust Survivors", *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 76, no. 2 (2006), 176.

<sup>574</sup> Aleida Assmann (1997), as cited in Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory", *Poetics Today* 29, no. 1. (2008), 110.

<sup>575</sup> Dani Rowland-Klein and Rosemary Dunlop, "The transmission of trauma across generations: identification with parental trauma in children of Holocaust survivors", *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 32, no. 3 (1998), 360.

memory with another young person within the same generation – as the nature of family and community itself is symbiotic and happens within cyclical communication.<sup>576</sup> Hirsch refers to these as trans-generational exchanges.<sup>577</sup> Furthermore, it is not a feasible academic argument to say that amongst communities – the Gukurahundi violations, for instance, were meted solely towards one-generation cohort in isolation to the others. It was experienced by the whole community. A whole community is characteristically made up of a variety of generation cohorts – all at the same time, living together.

Over and above communities being made up of various generation cohorts living symbiotically – together; authors such as Field are additionally critics of the idea of the transmission/transference of memories.<sup>578</sup> This is because such a theory assumes the receiver of the transmitted memory is on the passive end of the process, without choice, nor influence etc. about what is being communicated to them. Field postulates in similar vein as Hirsch<sup>579</sup> does, that memories are not interchanged pathologically, but that vehicles such as photographs (amongst others) can enhance this memory making and facilitate its movement across generations.<sup>580</sup> With specific regard to Field's writing, he states that "photographs in their enduring 'umbilical' connection to life are precisely the medium connecting first and second generation remembrance, memory and post memory".<sup>581</sup>

In this regard, Field highlights the constant obsession with perusing (without parental guidance) the disturbing imagery of a book called *The War's Best Photographs: Pictorial Masterpieces of the Greatest Struggle the World has Known*, in his home, which both him and his brother referred to as "that book".<sup>582</sup> That book, along with continuous stimulation from his father's stories – aided him and his brother Ronald – as the second generation – to not only imagine World War II, but that this imagination with time became something of a perceived and felt reality for them. Field highlights that in some severe cases his childhood dreams so specifically copied, mirrored or placed him at the scene of certain photographs contained in "that book".<sup>583</sup> To an extent, this ties in with the idea of transportation and over-identification as postulated by Rowland-Klein and

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<sup>576</sup> Susan Rubin Suleiman, "The 1.5 Generation: Thinking About Child Survivors and the Holocaust", *American Imago* 59, no. 3 (2002), 280.

<sup>577</sup> Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory", *Poetics Today* 29, no. 1. (2008), 106, 108.

<sup>578</sup> Sean Field, "Loose Bits of Shrapnel: War Stories, Photographs, and the Peculiarities of Postmemory", *The Oral History Review* 41, no. 1 (2014).

<sup>579</sup> Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory", *Poetics Today* 29, no. 1. (2008), 115.

<sup>580</sup> Sean Field, "Loose Bits of Shrapnel: War Stories, Photographs, and the Peculiarities of Postmemory", *The Oral History Review* 41, no. 1 (2014), 16.

<sup>581</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>582</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>583</sup> Sean Field, "Loose Bits of Shrapnel..." (2014).



In the case of Gukurahundi, and due to the fear at the time of its occurrence; the memory was not captured or rather is rarely captured through photographs, but that does not negate the existence of other forms through which memory is carried. Seemingly, participants highlighted that many pictures were purposely destroyed by families during Gukurahundi – especially if they felt that pictures in the house, as found by the Fifth Brigade in their homes – of themselves or their children – in ZIPRA regalia, provided evidence of one's political affiliation (outside of ZANU) and led to being targeted, and in some cases killed by the Gukurahundi army. Therefore much of the intergenerational threads and paraphernalia supporting the movement of this memory is thus in its orality – which aids “imaginings” across generations.

It is said of this second generation that their memories can be created rather than experienced; and once created – they become an experience. Cole in similar vein speaks of this second generation as having the burden of distinguishing, for instance, the Holocaust – the historical event, and Holocaust the myth-making or what Field terms the “imaginings”.<sup>585</sup> Indeed, Gukurahundi is not exempt from mysticism. Indeed, forms of mysticism and myths are crucial where individuals or groups do not have sufficient information nor explanation for what they are feeling, along with the unclear fragments conveyed to them by parents.

An initial objective of the study, was the idea of making analysis – comparative where possible – of the memory of first generation Gukurahundi survivors and the post-memory of the second generation (those that were not born or were too young to even have any recollection of Gukurahundi). Interestingly, perhaps due to my snowball sampling method, or practically for other reasons, I landed up with a sample of a predominantly generation group which fell somewhere in the middle of both the first and the second generations.

### **7.3 Problematising the Concept of First/Second Generations**

Suleiman poses pertinent questions about accepted norms of generation thinking, and indeed highlights that the concept, over decades, has never reached consensus amongst academics.<sup>586</sup> According to Suleiman, one school of thought amongst historians argues that the concept of

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<sup>584</sup> Dani Rowland-Klein and Rosemary Dunlop, “The transmission of trauma across generations: identification with parental trauma in children of Holocaust survivors”, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 32, no. 3 (1998), 364.

<sup>585</sup> Tim Cole, “The Rise (and Fall?) of the Myth of the Holocaust” in Tim Cole (ed.), *Selling the Holocaust, From Auschwitz to Schindler. How History is Bought, Packaged and Sold* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>586</sup> Susan Rubin Suleiman, “The 1.5 Generation: Thinking About Child Survivors and the Holocaust”, *American Imago* 59, no. 3 (2002), 279.

generations is “too vague, ambitious, and stretchable” to be of much use. Whereas the opposing view states that it can be useful, as “age-related differences” or the collective experience shared by cohorts permanently distinguishes them from other generations with time – in any historical given situation. She thus questions what a generation is, and whether there were in fact generations of the Holocaust? This question lends importance to the Gukurahundi question, i.e. which are the generations that are spoken of in this incident? And can they be clearly defined and delineated? And if so, how does this contribute meaningfully to the study?

One of Suleiman’s arguments is that there should be clear distinctions made as well as a cognisance of the interplay between “historical generations” and atypical “family generations”, i.e. grandfather, father, and son relationships (which in themselves can never be atypical) in this era.<sup>587</sup> She posits that many of the intergenerational ideas in fact speak of historical generations more than they do of a familial one when she states that “an awareness of historical generations ... places importance of horizontal allegiances based on age rather than vertical allegiances based on family or social class”.<sup>588</sup>

Thus many studies would posit that both first and second generations who are similarly located during a historical occurrence possibly participate in common destinies. In this regard, Wiseman et al. assert that some of the common destinies of second generation’s trauma and memory are housed in emotions of anger (and/or passivity); as well as guilt (particularly empathic distress over the suffering of family and loved ones).<sup>589</sup> Wiseman et al. go on to further say that “guilt is felt by a person who bears no responsibility for any transgression” over their parents suffering. Wiseman presupposes that this guilt is exacerbated when there is an “inhibition of the expression of aggression and anger”.<sup>590</sup> Additionally, anxieties become central to the lives of children. Historians like Stoler talk about the difficulties and the potential productive use of “epistemic anxieties” to generate useful research about the past and present relationship.<sup>591</sup>

The problems with the assertion of clear-cut generations in memory studies are the following: First, studies – specifically psychological ones – remain inconclusive about whether there are indeed common destinies meted out to people, and therefore collective experience and shared sentiment; even if people are in the same space or in a similar location when a particular violation

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<sup>587</sup> Susan Rubin Suleiman, “The 1.5 Generation: Thinking About Child Survivors and the Holocaust”, *American Imago* 59, no. 3 (2002), 279.

<sup>588</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>589</sup> Hadas Wiseman, Einat Metzl and Jacques P. Barber, “Anger, guilt, and Intergenerational Communication of Trauma in the Interpersonal narratives of Second Generation Holocaust Survivors”, *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 76, no. 2 (2006), 177.

<sup>590</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>591</sup> Stoler, Ann Laura. *Along the Archival Grain : Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.

happens. As such people can respond to this violation and trauma differently, and according to one's individual coping mechanisms.

Second, and more significant, is that there are difficulties in defining exactly what a generation is, with considerations that need to be made about what time frames, and within which boundaries a generation is constituted. The notion of generation is crucial to historians because it relates to temporality, but yet we often do not unpack the complexity of generations as a lived practise. Additionally where a violation can create a belonging generation in itself, very often within that generation, are generation units – i.e. sub-groups<sup>592</sup> within the same generation; as well as a shared experience which can emanate out of one violation, and yet many more than one generation can be affected simultaneously. That is referring to

a generation as a set of “age related differences” allowing us to distinguish amongst those who were adults during those years, those who were children or adolescents, and those who were not yet born.<sup>593</sup>

Essentially a community is not made up of a specific age cohort.

## **7.4 Drawing Attention to the 1.5 Generation**

Suleiman postulates the idea of the 1.5 generation referring to

child survivors of the holocaust, too young to have an understanding of what was happening to them, but old enough to have been there during the Nazi persecution of Jews.<sup>594</sup>

Suleiman's gleanings, much like my own study highlight that whilst there are multiple familial generations in existence, there are challenges with clearly pin-pointing defined and unique first and second historical generations born out of surviving Gukurahundi.<sup>595</sup> In addition, the idea of a 1.5 generation is not used as a concept which is in contradiction or as an either/or to the first and the second generational doctrine. Rather it attempts to fill in empty gaps of people left out of the story – in this case children – who also form the first generation. An emphasis on child survivors incorporates their memory into the broader story as well.

The 1.5 generation, by virtue of being children falling within the first generation (as child survivors) provide evidence of the intergenerationality found in Gukurahundi, where there is a

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<sup>592</sup> Subgroups or generation units according to Suleiman can include antagonistic sub groups such as perpetrators vs. survivors of the same violation, and are therefore sub-groups within that generation cohort.

<sup>593</sup> Susan Rubin Suleiman, “The 1.5 Generation: Thinking About Child Survivors and the Holocaust”, *American Imago* 59, no. 3 (2002), 280.

<sup>594</sup> *Ibid*, 277.

<sup>595</sup> Susan Rubin Suleiman, “The 1.5 Generation...” (2002).

thread of variant ages represented in the community who are exposed to a violation together, without it being about one existent group over another.

According to Dwork's work, a good way of deciding this 1.5 generation is to consider new-born babies up to those at the age of 16 as a reference group.<sup>596</sup> She, however, does not expand on why the cut-off age for adolescence is at age 16, when in many countries, adulthood is entered into at the ages of 18 or 21. Other authors would go as far as saying that this 1.5 generation can be further divided and grouped into the 1.3 or the 1.7 generation – all this depending on distance from adulthood.<sup>597</sup> For instance, a 1.7 would be an older "child" or an adolescent falling between the ages of 11–16; and the 1.3 generation cohort would include new-born babies or a very young child during a violent occurrence (i.e. ages from new-born to 11 years of age). Naturally, within this same 1.5 historical generation cohort, where a new-born baby, along with a 16-year-old fall within the same category; it is clear that the understanding, the experience of the violation, as well as the intensity of the memory for a 2-year-old, and a 14-year-old – both victims/survivors of Gukurahundi – are evidently different, even as they are both given the status of being a child. If we postulate that childhood trauma is different to that of adults, and may shape their identity later, then drawing the internal boundaries and giving credence to this 1.5 generational cohort is imperative. Suleiman's study offers various discipline definitions in a cognitive psychological perspective and makes a strong case for the fact that violation is intergenerational, and amidst violence, children too are an integral part of the story.<sup>598</sup>

Using Dwork's timeframe within the Gukurahundi context specifically, then we know that a 16 year old at the time of the commencement of this violation in 1982 would have been born in 1966; whereas a newly born, at the tail end of Gukurahundi in 1987, would have been born in 1987. According to this formula, we therefore attempt to speak of a 1.5 generation born between the years 1966 to 1987.

Seemingly, I fall into this category if one simply uses the timeframe. Born in 1981, I was a year old at the commencement of Gukurahundi – which started in select parts of the country, and later spread out to others in phases. The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace report highlights that it was initially in Matabeleland North in 1982, and later moved to Matabeleland South in

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<sup>596</sup> Deborah Dwork, 1991, in Susan Rubin Suleiman, "The 1.5 Generation: Thinking About Child Survivors and the Holocaust", *American Imago* 59, no. 3 (2002), 281, 282.

<sup>597</sup> Susan Rubin Suleiman, "The 1.5 Generation: Thinking About Child Survivors and the Holocaust", *American Imago* 59, no. 3 (2002), 281.

<sup>598</sup> Susan Rubin Suleiman, "The 1.5 Generation: Thinking About Child Survivors and the Holocaust", *American Imago* 59, no. 3 (2002), 282.

At the time of writing this chapter (in 2018), these 1.5 generationers born within the years 1966–1987 are currently between the ages of 31 years and 54 years today. According to my interview list (see appendix A), 15 out of 28 participants make up the 1.5 generation cohort, falling somewhere in this middle. Participants like Sis’ Sipho<sup>600</sup> who was as young as age five (or six) at the time that the Gukurahundi army arrived in Lupane and burnt her parents alive – are examples of this generation. She is now 40 years old.

Intriguingly, throughout the interviews, the questions asked about whether a person considered themselves amongst the first or second generations, and if it contributed towards their memory – overwhelmingly became a non-question and concept which was brushed over very quickly, with participants moving on to other pertinent questions in the interview schedule. This indicates the limited value of first and second generation labels which are a product of Holocaust studies. Participants across the spectrum generally did not see nor refer to themselves as belonging to one category of a generation over another, and even as the concept was explained to them – could not relate to the terminology. They did not find it a very useful way of being categorised, and certainly did not want to classify their pain and trauma in this way. Instead, they simply saw themselves as victims and casualties of Gukurahundi. Whilst it is understandable for people to be critical of strict generational cohorts, it is problematic to dismiss the fact that parents and children have different experiences and responses to violence, whether it is directly experienced or not.

Over and above age in a historical generation, other factors come into play, such as geographical location; where someone in Germany and another in Poland, Hungary or France in the year 1933, would have experienced the holocaust differently.<sup>601</sup> As highlighted earlier, where I could be categorised (according to Dwork’s time frame) as a first generation child survivor of Gukurahundi, my experiences, being in a comparatively safe urban area in Bulawayo, as opposed to someone else born in the rural hot spots of Gukurahundi at that time differ. This makes us sub-groups of a similar historical generation. Does this then deem that we are survivors of the same era, even as our realities, experiences and geographies were different? Additionally, the Gukurahundi army moved locations constantly, with the first violations

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<sup>599</sup> Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP), *Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe: A report on the disturbances in the Matabeleland and the Midlands*. London: Hurst and Company, 2007.

<sup>600</sup> Sis Sipho, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>601</sup> Susan Rubin Suleiman, “The 1.5 Generation: Thinking About Child Survivors and the Holocaust”, *American Imago* 59, no. 3 (2002), 281.

occurring in Matabeleland North. Therefore someone in Matabeleland North in 1982, and another person in Matabeleland South in 1982 (where Gukurahundi had not yet started) form the same age cohort, but their realities and experiences of the violation occur at different times. They would therefore share divergent stories about memories of 1982.

Lastly, Pearce reminds us that intergenerational memory does not solely happen at individual/community or regional level as has been the focal point where Gukurahundi is concerned.<sup>602</sup> He reiterates that at national level too, exists intergenerational memory, and in turn that the culture of passing down national memory through transposition exists. Pearce focuses his discussion on Southern Africa, on the various liberation armies in Angola, who after independence sought to pass down certain memories to the next generation. Sometimes these memories included a deliberate forgetting, and at other times were deliberately re-shaped memories of the struggle in order to overcome the uncertainties of the present.<sup>603</sup>

Specific attention is paid to how the Zimbabwean government has sought to repackage the memory and history to the next generation (those born after independence) as this knowledge is presented to them largely through school syllabuses, and through other state media.<sup>604</sup> It is noted that the rhetoric of a “patriotic history” of ZANU has been shaped through the “forgetting” and silencing of other actors who are not the ruling party, e.g., ZAPU.<sup>605</sup> To this effect, school books which address the Second Chimurenga<sup>606</sup> of Zimbabwe in 1979 will write in great “mythical” detail and memory about what ZANU did for the nation (as a way to legitimise their rulership of the nation), and yet will never write, or at least to the same extent, will not include in formal school history books the sacrifices made by ZAPU guerrillas who also fought this same struggle.<sup>607</sup> This remains a point of contention, and bitterness amongst several participants to the study, who fought as liberators during the armed struggle; were never officially recognized or acknowledged for their sacrifices; live in abject poverty; and were only ever faced with the existence of a Fifth Brigade army attempting to kill them – in the new Zimbabwe which they thought they were fighting for.<sup>608</sup>

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<sup>602</sup> Justin Pearce, “Contesting the Past in Angolan Politics”, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 41, no. 1 (2015).

<sup>603</sup> Justin Pearce, “Contesting the Past in Angolan Politics”, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 41, no. 1 (2015), 117.

<sup>604</sup> Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni, “‘For the Nation to Live, the Tribe Must Die’: the politics of Ndebele Identity and belonging in Zimbabwe” in Bahru Zewde (ed.), *Society, State and Identity in African History*, (Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies, 2008), 169.

<sup>605</sup> Justin Pearce, “Contesting the Past in Angolan Politics”, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 41, no. 1 (2015), 106.

<sup>606</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup> Chimurenga is the bush war/guerrilla war which led to the liberation of Zimbabwe

<sup>607</sup> Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni, “‘For the Nation to Live, the Tribe Must Die’...” (2008), 186.

<sup>608</sup> Examples include but are not limited to Mr. Jabulani Mpande, August 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa; and Mr. Themba Nkomo, April 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

In light of the theories about “generations” and “intergenerational” memory posited throughout the paper thus far, I turn attention more specifically towards the discussions from the interview participants themselves. Where possible, I will link this to the theories and literature highlighted thus far.

## 7.5 Analysing and Discussing “Intergenerational” Memory According to Participants

As highlighted earlier, divisions such as the first, second, and third generation were concepts that seemed to have currency amongst academic circles – and yet on a practical level, both survivors and survivor offspring of Gukurahundi did not have any use for these terms – and found them not to be useful categories when talking about their memories. In fact it was thought to be rather a strange lens of discussing survivorhood. It seems this distinction between generations is theoretical discourse far removed or alienated from practicality. It is also a luxury that survivors do not have to deliberate upon. They are consumed with dealing with their ordeal, and not whether they fall within the first or the second generation. Toto Nkosi said:

I am actually not sure whether I am a victim myself, or a first generationer even, but I tend to find comfort myself, out of the whole occurrence – in some way or the other?<sup>609</sup>

Interviewee Katherine asked, what make a person a first or a second generation?<sup>610</sup>

Participants stated that for them, Gukurahundi’s occurrence whilst private was also experienced within communities and communal set-ups. Where communities comprised of children, youth, adults and the elderly as this happened. For instance, Mama ka Zonda shares her ordeals about sexual violence at the hands of the army.

By the time we returned home ... our parents would have already heard about it. There was really nothing they could do about it. Our parents, like us, also could not see a future out of this situation. The only thing they tried to do was to *phephisa* [i.e. comfort] us as children. And try to help us be less angry and vengeful. They tried to contain our feelings of bitterness, and treated a very bad situation as respectfully as they could – for both us and them. There wasn't any real plan or resolution that they could make out of our situation ... they themselves felt scared.<sup>611</sup>

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<sup>609</sup> Mr. Toto Nkosi, June 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

<sup>610</sup> Ms. Katherine, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>611</sup> Mama ka Zonda, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

This is a rather sobering reality, but also reveals some candid thoughts from Mama ka Zonda. First, it reminds us that Gukurahundi, according to participants happened intergenerationally (seemingly the generations referred to here by participants are familial generations). Once again, as buttressed by Suleiman, these Gukurahundi survivors actually make up one historical generation, and not necessarily multiple family generations – even though amongst them were children and parents.<sup>612</sup> Second, this quote buttresses the idea that being an adult or a child in this specific situation did not really make a difference. The parents in this situation no longer had the power to protect their children, as they too were vulnerable.

There are a few other citations from participants drawing attention to their memories – as children – during Gukurahundi. What is striking for me is the recurrence of the word children that is stressed throughout. Even if Sis' Siphos, for example, might not have use of generations, the idea that there were children and parents remains. Nor were the children all the same age: they were at different stages of childhood and so their experiences and memories would seem to be shaped by that. Sis' Siphos says:

We used to be taken as children ... and just told to be around ... to be present as the soldiers did whatever they did ... So the soldiers, whenever they would come, whether they wanted to torture people or kill them or whatever ... us, the children – we would be grouped together somewhere. So they would have just called you – maybe to a meeting or something – whole families ... so then you would all have to be there.<sup>613</sup>

In the particular instance where her parents along with other villagers were burnt in a hut in her sight, Sis' Siphos notes:

They killed all the adults. Then they left us as children. We were left with nothing. No parents ... and? We had to run away because amongst the soldiers, they were some who said “let us kill these children too and finish everything off ... kill all of them”. And others said “no, let us just leave them/abandon them here”. So we eventually realized that it wasn't safe for us to be there anymore ... so we went far ... we went through the game park (with animals), walking as children ... walking. We were so many, it was all the children from our village line ... because we didn't have any adult to look after us. Then in the end we separated.<sup>614</sup>

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<sup>612</sup> Susan Rubin Suleiman, “The 1.5 Generation: Thinking About Child Survivors and the Holocaust”, *American Imago* 59, no. 3 (2002), 279.

<sup>613</sup> Sis' Siphos, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>614</sup> Sis' Siphos, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.



There are generation sub-groups belonging to this same period. For instance, it must be noted that even if girls and boys were within the same generational cohort, they were sub-groups to each other based on their experiences and the memories they can share. They are different. Based on participant accounts of soldier encounters, in any given occasion, a soldier was likely to kill the boy child, and rape the girl child.

Additionally, in a school in urban Bulawayo, at the commencement of the Gukurahundi atrocities, Zwelibanzi Malinga, a primary school going child (at the time) recalls the following experience:

I also remember another guy called Simbarashe Musove\* when we were in grade 3 he said to me, your father is the manager of the dissidents ... He must have heard that from his parents. And yes indeed, it turns out my family were ZAPU supporters.<sup>615</sup>

In this regard, Zwelibanzi and Simbarashe are from the same generation, and yet are in variant generational sub-groups, and will share different memories of the same period – based on the political ideology that has been transpositioned to them.

It also makes sense to note that in memory, a historical or a familial generation at that, can never be a homogenous group of people. As such, groupings made around such common destinies will always have shortcomings.

Second, over and above the first and the second generation (as well as increasingly 1.5 generation) rhetoric mentioned thus far, most participants insisted that there were missing generations' or cohorts in the whole Gukurahundi debate whose views are not coming to the fore. It became evident that these generations as highlighted by participants are not necessarily age generations, as much as they are geographical generations.

Research participant Katherine felt that this missing generation are the many people impacted by Gukurahundi who live in the diaspora – as she highlighted –

choosing to leave Bulawayo, and instead of taking a natural socio-economic progression to the capital city of Harare – choose to rather relocate to SA and other places further and beyond. A significant number of Ndebele [Mthwakazi] youth then would be barely in this country ... and most of them form a South African base.<sup>616</sup>

This is the generation that she asserts is missing from the Gukurahundi dialogue. Additionally in this quote, Katherine touches on some of the geographical memory debates, which have been

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<sup>615</sup> Mr. Zwelibanzi Malinga, April 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

\* This name and surname, Simbarashe Musove, like all other participant names in this research is a pseudonym – for the purposes of fulfilling ethical considerations.

<sup>616</sup> Ms. Katherine, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

highlighted in the previous chapter – seeming to denote that the movement of this generation is outside of the Zimbabwean borders. And deliberately so.

Authors such as Ndlovu-Gatsheni would argue to the contrary of Katherine's views, citing that diasporas – through the accessible medium of social media – have had quite a significant voice in this whole debate, and are not missing, but rather are present.<sup>617</sup> Additionally, Ndlovu-Gatsheni notes that this Gukurahundi conscientisation (along with other equally traumatic occurrences) increasingly become an issue amongst the “youth” – who come of age, and then begin to ask questions which they would not have cared for, nor have been interested in asking as younger children. Seemingly, the Gukurahundi story at this juncture holds importance because amongst a myriad of reasons, it becomes a story embedded in the production of, or the making of Zimbabwean and/or “Ndebele” identity.<sup>618</sup> In the diaspora, and especially in the absence of other cultural tropes – this may be where identity matters.

Indeed many participants seemed to speak to this idea highlighted by Ndlovu-Gatsheni. Participant Toto Nkosi states that he has never had any expectation of his children, who are born in South Africa – to feel burdened by the identity tropes of being Zimbabwean, nor Kalanga at that.<sup>619</sup> He stated that this next generation born in the diaspora should not take responsibility or blame for not being a part of the Gukurahundi story, and naturally that it is not always of relevance to them.

I have been here (South Africa) for nearly 28 years – and thus my children, will acculturate to whatever culture is around them. That is to be expected ... especially as there is the reality that for many of these children, the Zimbabwean political story is not a part of their lives (anymore).<sup>620</sup>

Indeed, Brian Nyathi<sup>621</sup> asserted the same sentiments when he highlighted that because of migration and globalization the world is becoming a large village.

No amount of harping on about “Good old Zimbabwe” – to the next generation – can ever really make them any more passionate about topics such as Gukurahundi – if they feel that they cannot relate to them ... or are far removed from it all.<sup>622</sup>

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<sup>617</sup> Sabelo J Ndlovu-Gatsheni, “‘For the Nation to Live, the Tribe Must Die’: the politics of Ndebele Identity and belonging in Zimbabwe” in Bahru Zewde (ed.), *Society, State and Identity in African History*, (Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies, 2008), 190.

<sup>618</sup> *Ibid*, 188 -189.

<sup>619</sup> The Kalanga are a distinct Bantu group inhabiting the far western geographies of Zimbabwe. Erroneously synonymized with the Ndebele, BaKalanga form part of the larger Mthwakazi populations affected by Gukurahundi.

<sup>620</sup> Mr. Toto Nkosi, June 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa

<sup>621</sup> Mr Brian Nyathi, November 2015. Interviewed in Johannesburg, South Africa.

<sup>622</sup> Mr Brian Nyathi, November 2015. Interviewed in Johannesburg, South Africa.

This principle does not apply solely to the next (or second generation). There are many first and 1.5 generation survivors of Gukurahundi themselves who have disconnected with this history, and are living outside of the country.

The problem with a lot of us, as Ndebeles is that we have disassociated ourselves and left the country. Many have gone as far as illegally assimilating into South Africa ... preferring to be identified as South African citizens ... especially as our language is literally Zulu. It is easy to become one of them. Bulawayo is no longer the same. The Ndebele people abandoned it. The culture has changed.<sup>623</sup>

In this case, it is not that Thobela Moyo does not care about Gukurahundi necessarily – it is just that his distance and lengthy time away from the site of trauma, has made it an occurrence he can no longer relate to. He has acculturated elsewhere. Naturally, this cannot be generalised for every survivor out in the diaspora, as such is an individual choice. In similar vein, I am not arguing that one has to be away from the country to disassociate with the memory of Gukurahundi, as there are many people living within Zimbabwean walls itself who, whilst affected, can no longer relate to the story – for several reasons. Even when people disassociate from this memory, they will still have flashbacks and other fragments returning while living in a different context/time.

However, despite Toto Nkosi's assertions that his children born in the diaspora were not likely to relate nor to assign any meaning to occurrences in Zimbabwe's past such as Gukurahundi – he noticed that at a certain point, and as they grew older, his children and niece were changing.

My 28 year old son – changed in his early 20s. I saw he has a tattoo of the Zimbabwean bird here (points to the specific area) ... and I saw that ... even on Facebook, his Zimbabweanness had become paramount to his existence. It is an identity yearning I think.<sup>624</sup>

Along with:

my niece born here in (South Africa) in 1994. If you ask her where she is from ... on her Facebook etc. ... she says she is from Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. She wants something she can call home. What happens is that yearning starts in your 20s because that is when reality hits ...<sup>625</sup>

The participants speak to ideas of “coming of age”; a making of an identity, or else a yearning for it; and a time when such an interest in Zimbabwe takes place. Of greater significance is the idea that social media, is one of the sites of the memory making. In this regard, Toto Nkosi nor any

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<sup>623</sup> Mr. Thobela Moyo, May 2014. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

<sup>624</sup> Mr. Toto Nkosi, June 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa

<sup>625</sup> Mr. Toto Nkosi, June 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa

other parents for that matter can never fully control what their children will choose to learn when they become adults.

There is consensus amongst participants that telling the story of Gukurahundi to their offspring is needed, but not when the recipients are children. They have to be older. As such, whilst Toto Nkosi had no problem with his children knowing about Gukurahundi, he never forced the knowledge and his memories on them.<sup>626</sup> He waited for a time when they were older; more receptive to hearing about it; when they could understand this knowledge better; and specifically when they asked certain questions of him. It is at that point that he begins to answer their questions by sharing his memories. Of course it cannot be assumed that parents are the only source of knowledge about these events, except if it is about the parents specific experiences.

Indeed, Field admits to being too young as preadolescent child to understand the intricacies of his father's pictures or the concept of war itself, even though they were exposed to them.<sup>627</sup> In fact, the author would go further to say that exposing children to such graphic and vivid pictures as memories of World War; or even stories told in orality – consists of gross negligence and can be harmful to the children.<sup>628</sup> He notes a bevy of emotions created by viewing those pictures as a child – to include being scared, being fearful, being intrigued, being consumed, and always looking for his father in the pictures.

Intriguingly, one question asked in the interviews to first generation survivors of Gukurahundi was whether they wanted their children – the second generation, born after the occurrence, to know about what happened to them. This question created much debate in interviews, and as a result, I take time to elaborate on some of these of the views expressed.

Overall, there were mixed views, but generally an overwhelming stance tended to state that the second generation needed to know the story, as it was an integral part of their history. Several other reasons are highlighted about why the second generation seek these answers to include the following:

The silencing of the atrocities lends to the mysticism and lure surrounding the occurrence. The space of social media thus gives it a life. This is what Garuba refers to – in writing about memories of violence in South Africa - as “bringing the past into the public knowledge; and the linear

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<sup>626</sup> Mr. Toto Nkosi, June 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa

<sup>627</sup> Sean Field, “Loose Bits of Shrapnel: War Stories, Photographs, and the Peculiarities of Postmemory”, *The Oral History Review* 41, no. 1 (2014), 9.

<sup>628</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

progression from concealment to revelation” through clicking away (i.e. in this instance taking photos).<sup>629</sup> Additionally, and oftentimes, the second generation born in a human rights era, tend to have an underlying quest for truth and justice, or else healing and peace. Lastly, this knowledge becomes important for the next generation as it fosters a greater connectivity with their parents, or else an empathy that seeks to understand their experiences.

For instance, Field reiterates that him and his brother’s fixation with his father’s memories amongst other reasons, lay in the fact that

it was our deep desire to connect with our father, the emotionally absent man, that drew us further into these visual and oral sources about the war ... It was while he told war stories that he was emotionally present and that we experienced brief moments of masculine connection with him.<sup>630</sup>

As such, the need for an emotional correlation and conjoining with the parents becomes a significant aspect of the relationship. MaNcube noted the empathy and deep connectivity from her children – with regard to human rights work – which her and her husband are involved in. She has noted that over time, her children seem to be following suit in their parent’s views and advocacy too.

In fact the *uzwelo* [empathy] that my husband and I have for intimidated and tortured people that we come across and support – we seem to see the same attributes in our children.<sup>631</sup>

MaNcube, as well as Hlabangana reiterate that it is not helpful to hide the truth from the next generation, as this information can be found in other places.<sup>632</sup> Indeed, the memory of Gukurahundi itself looms too large to be hidden – in what Garuba refers to as “‘mythologies’ - so large that it is perhaps idealistic to expect that any individual will be able to live outside of its power” and existence.<sup>633</sup> For instance, it was difficult for MaMpofu to hide from her son, the circumstances surrounding his birth, and by virtue of that, the story of Gukurahundi.<sup>634</sup> MaMpofu’s baby was miraculously born alive, but has a severe hand injury (which cannot be hidden) as a result of numerous beatings she received from the Gukurahundi army – to the point

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<sup>629</sup> Harry Garuba, “A Second Life: Museums, Mimesis, and the Narratives of the Tour Guides of Robben Island” in Noëleen Murray, Nick Shepherd and Martin Hall (eds.), *Desire Lines: Space, Memory and Identity in the post-apartheid city*, (London: Routledge, 2007), 130.

<sup>630</sup> Sean Field, “Loose Bits of Shrapnel: War Stories, Photographs, and the Peculiarities of Postmemory”, *The Oral History Review* 41, no. 1 (2014), 16.

<sup>631</sup> MaNcube, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>632</sup> MaNcube, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe; and Hlabangana, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>633</sup> Harry Garuba, “A Second Life: Museums, Mimesis, and the Narratives of the Tour Guides of Robben Island” in Noëleen Murray, Nick Shepherd and Martin Hall (eds.), *Desire Lines: Space, Memory and Identity in the post-apartheid city*, (London: Routledge, 2007), 130.

<sup>634</sup> MaMpofu, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda Zimbabwe.

where she was convinced she was going to die. Growing up, it was difficult for her to ignore his questions about the condition of his arm, so she told him. Overall, participants asserted that it is better that these memories are told to their children by themselves – i.e. the parents/family/the first-hand experience, as other sources can be damaging, or “erroneous” – in terms of the type of story they will tell them – fearing that it would have a lot of “untruths”.

Indeed, Garuba highlights that the fact that tour guides in Robben Island are known to have been arrested and lived on the island for a season, is one of the greatest lures of the place.<sup>635</sup> There is the underlying assumption of “authenticity” given to tourists that they are getting a first-hand eyewitness testimony – and thus they do not simply see the guides as subjects of a violent past, but they also become objects of the memory. In similar vein, the general consensus was that Gukurahundi memories as shared at the hand of first generation survivors/witnesses are therefore deemed to be “more accurate”.

Authors such as Field question the veracity of a story being “accurate”, simply because it has been told through the eyes of a first-hand experience.<sup>636</sup> He notes that “eyewitness testimonies of violence cannot be assumed to be more reliable than those that are not directly witnessed” and intergenerational observations can be made of this. Such that, what second generationers know, even as they have not personally witnessed it, can be accurate. In the same way that an eyewitness too can be inaccurate. Overall, it is also generally very difficult to prove the accuracy/inaccuracy of a person’s memory. This discussion has been highlighted in chap. 5 based on debates from authors such as Portelli who addressed that these “inaccurate stories” are in fact a different kind of credibility or truth when he states that

the diversity of oral history consists in the fact that “wrong” statements are still psychologically “true”, and that this truth may be equally as important as factually reliable accounts.<sup>637</sup>

The importance of memory is the creation of meanings, the understanding of the context and the identities associated with a specific memory, more than its veracity. Memory is driven and structured by desires for meanings or the need to cope when many of the memories are laden with painful and other difficult emotions.

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<sup>635</sup> Harry Garuba, “A Second Life: Museums, Mimesis, and the Narratives ...” (2007), 131.

<sup>636</sup> Sean Field, “Loose Bits of Shrapnel: War Stories, Photographs, and the Peculiarities of Postmemory”, *The Oral History Review* 41, no. 1 (2014).

<sup>637</sup> Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and other Stories, Form and Meaning in Oral History* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), 51.

Over and above the “accuracy” debate, the majority of family members who passed down their memories to second generationers in the family, said it was better when they did so because they could personalise these stories, and give them a relevance or contextualise such occurrences within their family history. Participant Toto Nkosi aptly states this when he asserts:

I tell them from the point of view of who their grand father was, who their uncles were etc. These stories are the stories of victims of Gukurahundi. So I won't just raise Gukurahundi as an independent topic – I will be talking about my uncle so and so, “you know Ntabeni's father? – this is what happened to Ntabeni's father”. Then in that process I get to explain things. So it doesn't make sense for me to have just an independent political discussion about Gukurahundi – I won't even initiate it except if they ask me.<sup>638</sup>

In addition, Toto Nkosi highlights how he tells his story, and shares his memories intergenerationally, by making it fun for them – through creative expression.

There are some beautiful ZAPU songs that I know, but I am well aware that my children will never know them. We sing them with my friends when we get drunk. We will like really get into it ... and my children sometimes if they are there will enjoy that – as it is quite meaningful for them.<sup>639</sup>

Participant Thobela Moyo gives an additional example of storytelling from his grandfather, who told him his family history or lineage in a fun and personalised way.

Yho ... my grandfather, he was a historian [said with much admiration and emphasis]. Like, he was really really deep into his history. He was a lovely story teller. Oh my gosh, my grandfather ... I used to love his stories.<sup>640</sup>

Seemingly this was a recurrent theme amongst first generationers, i.e. to tell their stories through songs, idioms and proverbs (i.e. speaking in “sayings” and parables, where sometimes the meanings are hidden and convoluted); or through folk tale (*inganekwane*), as well as through the lens of the bible and traditional religion.

However, it can be argued that the sharing of knowledge does not necessarily always follow the movement of knowledge or ideas from the first to the second generation – as linear like, and bottom down. Indeed, Jabulani Mpande, much like Thobela Moyo gleaned his knowledge to a certain extent from his father and grandfather. He does however attribute other people as being involved in his politicisation, who were not necessarily family members, nor the first

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<sup>638</sup> Mr. Mthimkhulu, June 2016. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

<sup>639</sup> Mr. Toto Nkosi, June 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

<sup>640</sup> Mr. Thobela Moyo, May 2014. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

generation.<sup>641</sup> Over and above the intergenerational, and through what Hirsch refers to as transgenerational memory, we see various stakeholders creating memories for him.<sup>642</sup> For instance, a debating group at his school with his peers became the informal, and yet powerful platform behind his politicisation. Additionally, Jabulani's young history teacher imparted a lot of knowledge to him about the liberation struggle and even garnered articles and information from the international community (during a time when news was banned in the then Rhodesia). Thus his knowledge about a silenced political situation sometimes came from the diaspora, and largely from the first world community such as expat friends and their relatives. Overall, Jabulani's connectivity and networks across generations, across race, including mentors, certainly allowed transgenerational memories to abound.

In turn, Jabulani Mpande took the knowledge he had gleaned at school, home (to the rural areas) during his school holidays and shared these on-goings with his parents, siblings and neighbours in a bid to conscientise them politically and socio-economically.<sup>643</sup> From Jabulani's case we see the second generation informing the first generation.

Some of the knowledge we passed to our parents and our communities during the liberation struggle was really to challenge gender norms, and to insist on the girl child going to school. Many people in the rural areas did not send girls to school.<sup>644</sup>

Another significant reason why the first generation strongly felt the story of Gukurahundi needs to be told was that its telling, answers to, or else gives a lot of context about current Zimbabwean political and socio-economic occurrences. There was an overwhelming agreement amongst participants about the reality that history has a way of repeating itself. This insight to some degree echoes the psychoanalytic view that the legacies of trauma are most evident in the repetitions in memory, and about how these repetition shape or do not shape both memory and history. It is an almost impossibility to attempt to hide the memory of Gukurahundi from this generation because they live in an era with constant reminders of its existence now, even as its occurrence is well over thirty years back. Therefore participants believe that this information will help the next generation to figure out and understand why certain things are the way they are. MaNcube gave this specific example of governance patterns that can be learnt from Gukurahundi:

[I]t is good to try to let our children know that these issues of political parties fighting for political dominance over a nation – i.e. such as political parties MDC vs. ZANU

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<sup>641</sup> Mr. Jabulani Mpande, August 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa; & Mr. Thobela Moyo, May 2014. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

<sup>642</sup> Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory", *Poetics Today* 29, no. 1. (2008), 108.

<sup>643</sup> Mr. Jabulani Mpande, August 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

<sup>644</sup> Mr. Jabulani Mpande, August 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.



fighting and killing each other as seen in this generation ... is not a new phenomenon. They need to know that these roots go as far back to the times when ZAPU and ZANU split in 1963 and constantly fought against and killed each other. These stories – including Gukurahundi – remain continuous evidences of *umbangazwe*.<sup>645</sup>

For example, at the height of the 2008 elections, MaNcube and her children slept by the rocks in the bushes near their rural home – as a consequence of their father's activist lifestyle. He is a human rights advocate, and monitors elections within the community amongst other things. He was actively pursued at election time, and barely made it out of the house with his family before a contingent of unknown assailants arrived to burn down his home by night. Naturally, MaNcube's children (the eldest aged 20 – at the time the interviews were conducted) have lived, have seen and are impacted enough to understand the intimidation and torture of Gukurahundism at work.

Socio-economically, the generational ripple effect of orphaned families losing breadwinners through death or disappearance during Gukurahundi amongst other things is a version of Gukurahundism which becomes a reality, experienced in the present day by the next generation.<sup>646</sup> The lack of economic opportunities led many young people to flee the country as economic migrants or seeking political asylum.

My children ... my daughter said to me, "if you are planning to go back to Zimbabwe, please know that I am not going back with you". My daughter cannot relate to the positive stories that I tell her about growing up in Zimbabwe. Instead she associates the country with the socio-economic strife she remembers, just before she left the country as a kid [14 years old] – in 2008, at the height of starvation.<sup>647</sup>

Amongst participants it was strongly reiterated that one of the reasons that there should be deliberate efforts aimed at the next generation, and generations after them, to know the story of Gukurahundi, was around the idea that oral history can get lost over time. Hlabangana for example, stated that it is not enough to simply share this history in its current form largely through the oral telling, but that the next step is for it to be recorded and stored.<sup>648</sup> In this regard, Hlabangana understood and believed that the documentation of Gukurahundi gives it a longer life and its knowledge becomes accessible, spanning across more generations to come.

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<sup>645</sup> MaNcube, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>646</sup> Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP), Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe: A report on the disturbances in the Matabeleland and the Midlands. London: Hurst and Company, 2007.

<sup>647</sup> Mr. Brian Ncube, November 2015. Interviewed in Johannesburg, South Africa.

<sup>648</sup> Mr. Hlabangana, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

We want this history to be written down for our children. So that they know that during the Smith era such and such happened ... in Gukurahundi this happened ... and our elections have traditionally been run like so and so. We want records so that they are not told falsities about occurrences ... because they are not likely to ever learn this through the formal history that they are taught at schools. But rather so that they know. So that they have tangible resources they can lean on.<sup>649</sup>

Seemingly there was a feeling amongst interviewees that the next generation are not taught this history formally through the school system (as part of the government's denial and bloodguiltiness). It is therefore incumbent for those with the knowledge to fill in the knowledge gaps because if they do not, the story can become mythical and imagined.

Participant Thobela Moyo in direct contradiction to Hlabangana and others asserts that knowledge of historical affairs, of not only Zimbabwe, but specifically the Ndebele nation was derived from the Zimbabwe Junior Certificate and the GCSE Ordinary level syllabi that he studied at school, where he feels that an authentic version of the story – and at least one that corroborates with what his grandfather passed down to him orally – correlate.<sup>650</sup> As such, he feels that his school made a conscious effort for him to learn this history. However, Thobela did not specify whether this history within the syllabus includes the topic of Gukurahundi specifically, whether any of this was taught within the syllabus, and thus examinable knowledge nationally. In contrast, this does not seem to be my recollection – having had studied history at both ZJC and O-level at exactly the same time as Thobela Moyo (we were born the same year and went through the same schooling system at the exact same time), I do not ever remember being taught any of this.

Amongst interview participants, some survivors meted accusations to the next generation stating that they have repeatedly heard the horrific experiences at the hand of the Gukurahundi Army, and yet still do not seem to take the matters seriously, nor care.

This new generation ... they say they want to see Gukurahundi in order to believe it. They do not understand how painful or difficult an experience it is. When we tell them stories, they do not take them seriously. It is almost as if they want to see war for themselves to know what kind of an impact it has. A negative impact. But because they have not seen violence and war, they approach the whole topic carelessly and with much naiveté.<sup>651</sup>

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<sup>649</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>650</sup> Mr. Thobela Moyo, May 2014. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

<sup>651</sup> Gogo Thandeka, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

There remains a large cohort or rather the majority of interview participants, who whilst conceding that there should be a telling/sharing of Gukurahundi memories intergenerationally, still assert that these oral stories should not be told in their fullness, or entirety, and need to be censored – for several reasons. This ties in with the view that the responsibility the second generation (especially children) carry from both conjecture and knowing is a heavy burden to bear. Interviewer Jonah aptly summarises the dominant view that telling the second generation about Gukurahundi without selectivity is both damaging emotionally, and can be divisive when he asserts:

[T]elling my children about my experiences and their history is a good thing. But there is a way that they have to be told this story, so that it does not arouse anger in them, but rather teaches them about the realities of life. These traumatic stories have to be cleaned up for them, as ultimately, we want to charter a way of peace going forward for them.<sup>652</sup>

It was felt that selectivity was an important way of hiding pain, along with encouraging a nonviolent way forward for the next generation.

[W]e should be careful that we don't transmit our anger to the next generation and the generation after that because blind anger can be very dangerous. I feel that the next generation has had anger transmitted upon them even though they are not directly tarnished and I can see that the extent of the violence, the anger and the tribalism is already worse.<sup>653</sup>

Brian Nyathi went as far as noting that this memory must be tweaked, so much such that it is even romanticised when he asserts:

[T]hey should only be told good things about their heritage. Too much knowledge is not good, and doesn't necessarily foster reconciliation. Our children do not need to know everything. It is good for them to know positives about history. But not everything. Forgetting is necessary as well – especially if we are going to gear our children for the globalised generation which we now live in.<sup>654</sup>

This forgetting is reiterated by authors such as Buckley-Zistel who show how amidst massacres in Rwanda – the community, through selective amnesia chose to actively forget their trauma, and conveniently distilled as well as left out the conversation – so that they would not pass along to

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<sup>652</sup> Mr. Jonah Dube, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>653</sup> Mr. Zwelibanzi Malinga, April 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>654</sup> Mr. Brian Ncube, November 2015. Interviewed in Johannesburg, South Africa.

their children “bad” memories.<sup>655</sup> The amnesia also helped them to live together in the communities with their tormentors as neighbours.

Where everyone kept using the phrase that “it can be damaging” to children, a few participants gave specific examples showing what these damaging aspects are. For instance, Hlabangana highlighted that it is emotionally damaging and he has seen this manifesting mostly through anger and hate speech, meted at Shona-speaking peoples. He says:

[A]lready in this generation there is so much hate about what has happened. If you share some of these stories with this new generation ... they internalize things so much, and want to take it out on the whole “shona” nation. They get convinced that this bad spirit and violence lives in all shona people ... a people who are now being painted by the same brush I think it is dangerous – the way your generation thinks.<sup>656</sup>

Of interest and based on his calculation of my age during the interview, is that Hlabangana referred to this group that thinks dangerously – as “my generation” including me in this category. And in so doing also painted all young people (second generations) with a brush – in the very same way that he is opposed to all shona people being grouped together. I refer the reader to chap. 3, where I write a reflexivity section in depth, and mull over my positionality as a young Ndebele woman undertaking research in this field, and where participants are often trying to figure out my positionality.

Eppel also notes the hardening of ethnicisation in this current era such that Hlabangana’s observations are not amiss.<sup>657</sup> The intergenerational impact of these stories being told has impacted identity and has helped people to draw clear lines in the sand, sadly based and understood simply from ethnicity (which is itself a social creation).<sup>658</sup> A participant from the second generation, currently living in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe stated that in current times, he feels that being Ndebele is a burden in the country as it means

you don’t stand any chance of making it. At our organisation here where I work, there are kids who drop off their CVs daily, for example – hoping to find jobs. The trend amongst these varsity graduates is that even when one is Ndebele, in terms of language, they have learnt to put English, Shona and Ndebele on their CVs – in that

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<sup>655</sup> Susanne Buckley-Zistel, “Remembering to Forget. Chosen Amnesia as a Strategy for local co-existence in post-genocide Rwanda”, *Africa* 72, no. 2 (2006), 131 -133.

<sup>656</sup> Mr. Hlabangana, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>657</sup> Shari Eppel, “‘Gukurahundi’: the need for truth and reparation” in Brian Raftopoulos and Tyrone Savage (eds.), *Zimbabwe Injustice and Political Reconciliation* (Harare: Weaver Press, 2004).

<sup>658</sup> Leroy Vail, “Introduction” in Leroy Vail (ed.), *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (London: James Currey, 1989).

order. One's ability to speak Shona is paramount to getting the job ... so you ensure that you include it – as your number one African language. If you don't do that ... you won't get any job.<sup>659</sup>

In similar vein, it is damaging not only in the way that hate speech is meted at all Shona people. The other aspect of the damage is a hatred, an unhealthy obsession with defying soldiers (and police) in uniform, as they happen upon them along the way. There is also an apathy towards leaders or even practices such as participating in elections in the current age – supposedly as a retaliation against violations that their forbears committed, or turned a blind eye to, instead of protecting them.

My younger son, who was born with a non-functioning arm as a result of my being beaten at pregnancy by the army is so so cross, such that if he meets soldiers he fumes and continues to spoil for a fight. He is altogether disrespectful and contentious towards them. I try to tell him about the ramifications of being rude to policemen or soldiers when he meets them, for example at roadblocks. I try to tell him that whatever they are doing, they too are human beings working to feed their families. But he has no tolerance of their presence.<sup>660</sup>

Some of the second generation (especially in the diaspora) in their anger, spoke about wanting to see a war breaking out as a response to their loss through Gukurahundi. Although it is not clear against who this war is aimed at – there is a clear indication at most basic level for them – through this war – to see the “other” also feeling pain and experiencing violation. Many of these youth also vowed that vocationally, they would never be soldiers, no matter how desperate they are for work. Intriguingly, whilst many survivors are happy to abscond Ndebele (Mthwakazi) soldiers, as not having been a part of the Gukurahundi army (as the assumption is that these soldiers would not have participated in the torture of their tribesmen), participants such as Mthombeni,<sup>661</sup> along with others are convinced that amongst the Gukurahundi army were Ndebele soldiers amongst them – who were complicit to the violence.

It was highlighted that some of the damaging stories were untellable, humiliating, and without dignity. Mthombeni highlighted that

for example, I cannot tell my children that their mother was raped by the Gukurahundi soldiers. It is an untellable story really, taboo and more importantly –

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<sup>659</sup>Mr. Zwelibanzi Malinga, April 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>660</sup>MaMpofu, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>661</sup>Mr. Mthombeni, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

it is a debasing tale. I do not want the children to know that about their mother ... out of respect. I have certainly withheld this information as a way of protecting ourselves and them from these deeper issues.<sup>662</sup>

Many participants have stories for instance, of rape, and even further – children born of rape as a result. Mama ka Zonda<sup>663</sup> has never told her husband as well as her son why he is named that way (i.e. Zonda, which means we are enraged or angry); and he in fact does not know that he is a product of rape – as it could be damaging to the family unit. She feared that her other children upon hearing about the circumstances behind his birth, would treat Zonda differently – and that her husband would struggle with the reality of knowing about her sexual abuse, sometimes committed in the most debasing ways and with tools inserted into her body parts. Zonda too would likely struggle emotionally with the burden of such a story. Many of these untellable stories thus doubly encourage silence.

Interestingly, Gogo Thandeka, contrarily to Mama ka Zonda felt that no story is untellable and decided that even the story of a child conceived out of numerous rape encounters, needed to be told, and that the gendered shame etc. associated with such experiences were not enough to keep her quiet.

My daughter is now married. She is well aware of how she was born. I told her. It was better for me to tell her the truth, which is that I did not know the father. And that I had not wished that particular circumstance of rape upon myself.<sup>664</sup>

MaNcube highlights that one way that this story can be damaging for them as they share their memories, without solely focusing on those that they are telling it to (i.e. sharing the memory with) is that

it is equally difficult for them to hear this information from us, because we were also all highly traumatised ... so our retelling of it can be impacted.<sup>665</sup>

Despite writing for a different context, Garuba's ideas resonate with this project, and specifically MaNcube's views highlighted above. Garuba states that an unintended consequence of retelling is its ability to damage or resurface intense emotions to the teller. He says:

[T]o make the sufferers tell the story of their personal deprivation, and pain all over and over again ... does not seem like a particularly good (thing).<sup>666</sup>

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<sup>662</sup> Mr. Mthombeni, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>663</sup> Mama KaZonda, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>664</sup> Gogo Thandeka, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>665</sup> MaNcube, April 2006. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>666</sup> Harry Garuba, "A Second Life: Museums, Mimesis, and the Narratives of the Tour Guides of Robben Island" in Noëleen Murray, Nick Shepherd and Martin Hall (eds.), *Desire Lines: Space, Memory and Identity in the post-apartheid city*, (London: Routledge, 2007), 132.

Out of the myriad of interviews conducted, only two interviewees felt strongly that the next generation really did not need to hear anything about the Gukurahundi violations. And that it should remain a closed chapter. They however chose not to elaborate on the reasons for such views.

Overall, second generation participants noticed and complained that old people (possibly first generation) are secretive. Wiseman et al. refers to this as the “conspiracy of silence” prevalent in families of survivors, and also seemed to highlight that in Holocaust studies where there was the withholding of information, children’s “normal” development was affected.<sup>667</sup>

Despite ideas held by adults that children need to be shielded during Gukurahundi through silence, many of these offspring started to understand what was going on through different mediums, amidst parents secrecy.

yes, Lookout Masuku in jail; Vote Moyo jailed; Edward Ndlovu in exile; Sydney Malunga in jail; Tshinga Nthutha killed ... “I remember I was in grade 2 or 3, and every paper I found around the house I would literary read ... and ask myself what’s happening here?”, ... because my dad didn’t want me to know – and I would eavesdrop on any conversation that the elders had.<sup>668</sup>

Jabulani Mpande, like Zwelibanzi pieced together what was going on around him by sitting nearby when adults spoke, eavesdropping, and essentially in this manner caught snippets of what was being said.<sup>669</sup>

Additionally there was a view throughout the interviews that intergenerationally, older people tend to be passive, whilst they – the young people – are activists.

I am an activist. But people like my dad, who actually know and saw things prefer to be secretive or silent. My father is not an activist. I am. I am on social media saying these things that need to be said. I don’t know why he won’t say anything.<sup>670</sup>

Although not generalisable, there are coping mechanisms attributed intergenerationally, by the participants. This discussion of coping mechanisms will ensue in the following chapter. However, I conclude this paper by giving an example of an intergenerationality lens. According to MaNcube, two of her relatives, one older, and the other his young nephew, were both beaten badly by the

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<sup>667</sup> Hadas Wiseman, Einat Metzl and Jacques P. Barber, “Anger, guilt, and Intergenerational Communication of Trauma in the Interpersonal narratives of Second Generation Holocaust Survivors”, *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 76, no. 2 (2006), 176.

<sup>668</sup> Mr. Zwelibanzi Malinga, April 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>669</sup> Mr Jabulani Mpande, August 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

<sup>670</sup> Ibid.

Fifth Brigade, and narrowly escaped death by running away (whilst tied up and naked). She highlights:

[F]or some odd reason, the other younger man – seemed to survive this whole ordeal, and has been able to continue to lead a semblance of a normal life after everything. Today, that younger man is strong, he is fine, and he continues to engage in community things. Politics. He says because he almost died ... there is no longer any point in trying to safeguard life. He became a counsellor in the community, under the opposition party – MDC.<sup>671</sup>

She notes:

[O]n the other hand, the older runaway with him, literally fell apart, and had a mental breakdown. He remained in hiding in his house for years ... refusing to come out, except by night ... and lived in the shadows. His quality of life was never the same. He failed to return to teaching ... and he became a recluse.<sup>672</sup>

MaNcube believes that it was easier for the younger nephew to continue to live a normal life, because he was in his youth, and thus had the energy or the sprightliness to pick himself up from the whole ordeal, where his uncle could not. As stated earlier, this could very well be a generalisation. These coping mechanisms will be discussed further in the next chapter (chap. 8).

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<sup>671</sup> MaNcube, April 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>672</sup> MaNcube, April 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.



## **CHAPTER 8. SURVIVING GUKURAHUNDI, DESIRING JUSTICE**

### **8.1 Introduction**

After discussing the various theoretical and practical implications of intergenerational memory, this chapter turns attention to surviving Gukurahundi during its occurrence, and coping in its aftermath. The ideas highlighted in the ensuing discussion reflect survival in the immediate aftermath of Gukurahundi, whereas coping mechanisms generally speak to the longer-term journey and mechanisms which participants have had to adopt along the way to endure the long-lasting realities of Gukurahundi. Some of these survival/coping mechanisms work intersectionally. Additionally, whilst some factors enhance coping, others are hindrances to this process – including the idea that memory or remembrance can be a hindrance to coping.

Survivors discuss the justice which they would like to see being achieved in response to Gukurahundi. The chapter ends by drawing attention to select memorialisations and justice initiatives, in which various groups or individual persons have engaged as a means to work through their sentiments, amidst state denial.

### **8.2 Surviving Gukurahundi**

A key issue to think about is as to how “victims of violence” shift into being “survivors”, bearing in mind how many remain victims without become survivors in the coping sense; and also, how later negative events can lead to survivors slipping back into victim mode. A key question is: what is the difference between victims and survivor mode? Part of the answer is located in the ways and degrees to which people are able to be in the “process” of rebuilding and empowering themselves after mass violence/genocide.

Survivors – particularly those of the first generation – gave examples about how they survived Gukurahundi at the time of its occurrence. A common response was that surviving Gukurahundi and coming out of it alive was simply based on “sheer luck”. This explains survivors’ guilt about being alive – knowing that others died. Therefore, throughout the thesis, surviving Gukurahundi is not something which participants are boastful about when they tell their stories.

Gogo Thandeka’s mother survived because she happened to have travelled to Bulawayo on some errand on the day before the army descended upon the rest of her family in February 1983. She

thus was fortunately out of town on the day that the army arrived at her home.<sup>673</sup> Unaware of Gukurahundi goings-on, she was prevented from returning to her home, despite attempting to do so, as transport networks and other things made it impossible for her to make the return trip. Ultimately, this is what saved her life – whereas some of her family members were not so fortunate.

In sharing the story about her uncle and her cousin, MaNcube notes that they survived death when by a stroke of luck, the soldier who was with them decided to take a health break.<sup>674</sup> In that split second, they both decided to run away – naked and still tied together. Thereafter Fifth Brigade constantly searched for these two persons, often harassing their family members to reveal their whereabouts; but were never able to detain them again. However, it must be noted that whilst it could be said that these persons survived death, the uncle specifically (older in age in comparison to MaNcube's cousin) was never able to cope with life after this incidence – the rest of his life saw him riddled with psycho-social distress and behaviours, which led to solitude.

Mthombeni says that he survived being tossed into Bhalagwe mine merely by God's grace, and no other way.

God intervened there. No one tried to run away at Bhalagwe. You can't run away from a gun. I had a narrow escape of my own death, by a stroke of luck. A couple of us had been called out or selected on that day – presumably to be thrown down the mine. However, at a whim, and out of the lot, I was called out/turned back and instead sent on an errand. I am therefore not sure if those people I had been selected with returned, or if they died on that day.<sup>675</sup>

In a different instance, but still in Bhalagwe, Mthombeni believes he survived because a "Ndebele" Fifth Brigade soldier in the army with a conscience had pity on him. He seems to attribute this largely to some ethnic loyalty, which made the soldier – whilst knowing that Mthombeni would eventually be killed or else die from torture injuries – try to make him as comfortable as he could in that situation. Mthombeni makes specific reference to the fact that he was badly injured and went to the Fifth Brigade tent to seek assistance. Unfortunately, the soldiers were refusing to help him saying:

"[W]hy would we waste our limited medical resources on this specific person? He is a dissident after all". A Ndebele soldier amongst them pleaded on my behalf, asking

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<sup>673</sup> Gogo MaMoyo, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>674</sup> MaNcube, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>675</sup> Mr. Mthombeni, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

the medic to at least sew me up without anaesthetic – and then encouraged me to just be brave and get on with it. It was excruciatingly painful. The Ndebele soldier again pleaded that I be sent home with the batch of elders who had been screened and were being released to their homes. But I was young ... in my twenties. And they refused. That soldier tried though.<sup>676</sup>

Mthombeni's account – whilst sincerely expressed – shows that the complicity of a fellow “black national” (in this case “the Ndebele soldier”) is often neglected in the sharing of his memories, based on his ethnic loyalties. Essentially, that Ndebele soldier was very much a part of the Gukurahundi army, although Mthombeni has chosen to remove the culpability and complicity of this soldier from his telling. Jacob Dlamini writes about this type of “conveniently excused complicity” often occurring as selective memories, when he talks about the role of African Askaris' brutality towards fellow Africans in his article.<sup>677</sup>

It is easy to assume that survivors or victims of Gukurahundi are the only ones that needed survival strategies during Gukurahundi. Yet, from the research, it comes out very clearly that these actions also took a toll on the soldiers themselves, who often needed to cope too. So unbearable did this work become that at times the soldiers needed other substances to sustain them. Indeed, soldiers are not one-dimensional “perpetrators”, and killing civilians is likely to evoke mixed and contradictory emotions. Mthombeni speaks of the soldiers at Bhalagwe as going to drink at Maphisa, and only when drunk, would they resume their work, which involved calling out people by night and dropping them down the mineshafts.<sup>678</sup> Rasta speaks of, and remembers, the Gukurahundi army as always being “high on something”, which he suspected was marijuana, as he noted that their states of mind were often unstable; and that they were aggressive. This is discussed in great detail in both chaps. 4 and 5, and so I shall not be elaborated upon it further here. Except to add that all these are representations of attempts to survive the violence, pressures, and emotions of Gukurahundi during its occurrence.

Most of the participants in the research stated that they believed that women and girls survived Gukurahundi as they were not always targeted for death, in the same way that young boys and men were.<sup>679</sup> This is not to say that girls and women were not counted amongst the fatalities of Gukurahundi, as many a pregnant woman died, accused of incubating the next generation of dissidents in their wombs. It simply asserts that there were fewer women casualties in

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<sup>676</sup> Mr. Mthombeni, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>677</sup> Dlamini, J. *Apartheid Confessions*. In *Interventions. International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*. Vol 18, 2016 – Issue 6. South Africa. 772 – 785.

<sup>678</sup> Mr. Mthombeni, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>679</sup> I.e. meaning that Toto Nkosi is assured of this statement. Mr. Toto Nkosi (Toto), June 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

comparison. This is because the army generally had a different, gendered approach in the way that it dealt with women and girls, and mainly used them for both domestic as well as sexual purposes, knowing that this itself was a type of torture for the women and girls. For many of these girls and women, survival was compliance. In this way, women and girls could remain alive during Gukurahundi more than men in some instances; however, this does not mean that because they “did not die” (i.e. survived Gukurahundi) that they coped or lived full lives after the torture and torment of sexual abuse, etc. Also, it would seem more likely that female victims/survivors’ lives were more likely to be dominated by “mourning” the loss of many others. This raises another gender question about surviving and attempting to cope: were male victims “allowed” to explicitly mourn through various expressions?

With regard to surviving in the long term – or rather coping with the memory vestiges of Gukurahundi over the years – a significant number of research participants (both women and men) felt that their coping mechanism today comprised outlets through which they get to speak about these issues, and which offer to them a much-needed opportunity to open up. It was also noted that increasingly, more people are beginning to speak about Gukurahundi; whereas in the past, this was not the case. I was not able to establish what the difference is today, which has encouraged this openness to sharing. MaMpfu states:

I find it better to talk it out with other people – this consoles me. It helps. I particularly want to talk about things and experiences that personally related to me ... so this interview helped because it gave me a chance to say everything out loud to myself.<sup>680</sup>

Jonah, in a similar vein to MaMpfu, asserts that the interview, which he had with me, was a therapeutic experience for him, as he has not had the luxury of being asked about his experiences, nor been given the space to speak so candidly and be heard.<sup>681</sup> Incidentally, Jonah’s interview was the most difficult one for me, and I imagine him as well, as he clearly skirted around the issues and deflected much, speaking and yet not really “speaking”. Over and above the individualised outlet to speak or to be heard, Jonah also stated that he takes comfort in the fact that he continues to live amongst a community and amongst a people whom he knows share the same collective memory as he does, as Gukurahundi affected his whole community simultaneously. He says, “living and sharing life experiences with other survivors like myself, about Gukurahundi, and life in general helps me to find release and forgiveness in my heart”.<sup>682</sup> This discourse of forgiveness in Zimbabwe is pretty common, especially as both the Church and the government have pushed a “forgive and forget” agenda.

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<sup>680</sup> MaMpfu, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>681</sup> Mr. Jonah Dube, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>682</sup> Mr. Jonah Dube, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

There is comfort in the collective and in a shared knowing. Whether the collective story/pain/memory is spoken about or remains in its silences, there is a shared knowing around Jonah. Thus, there is empathy as well as strength that survivors, like Jonah, can draw from each other in this community in order to cope. It could be argued that Jonah is making assumptions rooted in unified ideas of collective trauma and memory, about his community; and that the “shared”, which he speaks about, is an ideal that cannot be so easily generalised.

Part of the legacy of Gukurahundi (and imposed by the state) through denial is a culture and a people who are not always expressive nor dialoguing. It may have been a process of learned behaviour over time for different reasons, mainly necessity. This does not surprise me, especially as it has been highlighted throughout the thesis that words such as trauma and depression do not exist in local lexicon, and are therefore not describable. If these states of being cannot be described, then it means they possibly are deemed not to be in existence? In another view, the “indescribable” dimension of trauma means that it is beyond healing, and that it is difficult to find ways to live with the occurrence. Survivors are overwhelmed. For instance, research conducted by the Friendship Bench, Zimbabwe – a non-governmental organisation, which encourages dialogue through training lay health workers (usually grandmothers) as problem-solving therapists – found that “one in four persons suffer from depression and anxiety in Zimbabwe”, mostly as a result of the conditions of poverty prevailing in the country or trauma.<sup>683</sup>

An equally sobering statistic from the Friendship Bench is that “there are twelve psychiatrists serving a population of 15 million Zimbabweans currently”.<sup>684</sup> As a means to start addressing the mental health needs of the population, NGOs such as the Friendship Bench have had to use creative ways to get people engaging in dialogue. Some of these measures include the use of local languages such as the use of the Shona phrase *Kufungisisa* to denote deep thinking – this is based on the idea that using local lexicon can encourage the use of methods or practices, such as meditation, which have been thought to be “non-African”.<sup>685</sup>

The Friendship Bench also purposely relies on grandmothers as counsellors because of the gendered notion that in many African contexts, the centres of oral tradition and folk-telling, along with collective memory, are occupied by older women, in women’s spaces. In this case, the spaces are “benches”. Hofmeyr shares similar ideas, as discussed in chap. 6.<sup>686</sup> Folk-telling, as well as the

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<sup>683</sup> <https://www.friendshipbenchzimbabwe.org/>

<sup>684</sup> <https://www.friendshipbenchzimbabwe.org/>

<sup>685</sup> Ibid

<sup>686</sup> Hofmeyr, “We Spend our Years”, 6 “It became clear that such acquisition had occurred in households strictly divided by gender and that such different gender ‘spaces’ served to differentiate what were, in effect, cognate narrative skills”.

way the story of Gukurahundi is shared by participants, is strikingly different from the way it would be written about, for example. To evince the point above, I refer to Bryant who records the story of “a virgin birth”, which is told locally as a folk tale, reminding us of the important relationship between folk-telling and memory-making – a profoundly cultural experience and a cultural representation, along with the assertion of identity.<sup>687</sup> Bryant notes, in this particular circumstance, that the translation of “the virgin birth” folk tale from Zulu to English, along with how one *reads* the tale in the *written* as opposed to how it is shared in orality, meant that the language aspect changed the essence of the story.<sup>688</sup>

However, Gogo MaMoyo noted something to the contrary about the community (and the idea of a shared collective community story and site “or bench”) as a space of coping. She notes that living within the community and geographical site where Gukurahundi occurred, can cause further unravelling. She notes the presence of a former Fifth Brigade soldier, who at the end of Gukurahundi, decided to settle there. “I am surprised that after Gukurahundi, the soldier chose to live in such close, very close proximity to people whom as a soldier he had tormented”.<sup>689</sup> Whilst speaking about a different location to Gogo MaMoyo, MaMpofu (in Gwanda) highlighted that she too often sees her tormentor – who raped her – milling about at the shops till today; and that it is gruelling. It is a hindrance to her process of moving forward, and forgetting. She is thus not coping, because whilst she is in her community of shared knowing, she is also living with her tormentor. Alternatively, it could also be argued that MaMpofu’s ability to share communal spaces and interact with her tormentor despite the negative emotional impact it has on her shows her resilience and personal strength. It could be argued that this alone suggests that she is actually coping with the situation, even if it is not necessarily in the way that she would like.

Overall, it was highlighted that community networks can be coping and survival mechanisms in themselves, especially as Hlabangana notes that communities have become protective safeguards, with members warning each other of impending danger. Hlabangana highlights:

I am not so scared of intimidation at elections anymore. We have links with some community members who know that the human rights work which our organisation does is invaluable. They warn us to be on the alert. The community tries to protect us as best they can. They tell us of anything that they hear, unlike the past (i.e. during

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<sup>687</sup> “When identity is not in question, neither is memory” Antze and Lambek, *Tense Past: Cultural Essay*, xvii ; Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 11 - draws attention to this as not only identity making, but ideas of patriotism – which impact history and memory making. Bryant, A. T. (Alfred T.). *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal Containing Earlier Political History of the Eastern-Nguni Clans* Cape Town: Struik, 1965. p403 – 414.

<sup>688</sup> Bryant, A. T. (Alfred T.). *Olden Times in Zululand and Natal Containing Earlier Political History of the Eastern-Nguni Clans* Cape Town: Struik, 1965. p403 – 414.

<sup>689</sup> Gogo MaMoyo, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

the Gukurahundi days) where people used to be scared to say anything because they were worried that they would be accused of being informants. No one wanted to want to be incriminated.<sup>690</sup>

In this regard, Hlabangana also stated that he survives by equipping himself with knowledge and remaining in an NGO network of similar minded people.

I work for Amalungelo Organisation.<sup>691</sup> I eventually joined it because I had had enough of my rights being violated. I felt that a comprehensive knowledge of my rights would be useful to me, because when a problem arose I would know how to get redress legally [or through the constitution]. I feel better protected, as human rights lawyers are affiliated to the organisation, and offer their services.

He did note, however, that whilst

the lawyers seem better adept to defend newer human rights violations. I do not think they veer as far back as Gukurahundi anymore.<sup>692</sup>

Hlabangana has learnt certain skills through volunteering for this organisation and in turn imparts the knowledge to his community. He highlights that a key tenet is to assure people around him that whilst they cannot change the past, or where there are no real legal systems in place to address the past, they can at least enjoy their full citizenship rights today, as knowledge of their human rights is a form of freedom.

The idea of rationalising one's Gukurahundi circumstances (then and now) seemed to be a coping mechanism amongst a myriad of participants. MaMpofu said:

At times you try to take this whole Gukurahundi occurrence lightly because there is nothing one can do. For example, when I see soldiers today I get really upset ... but then I think that they are at work and are also trying to earn a living. Thinking like this helps me to let go of the anger.<sup>693</sup>

Mama ka Zonda, on becoming a mother because of Fifth Brigade's liberties, says:

I just took my mother's advice who said to me ... "you have to be brave – you are not the only one whom this is happening to. It is happening to everyone...to many other girls your age".<sup>694</sup>

In similar fashion, myriads of other tellings involved such rationalisations as a way of finding meaning. Rationalising enables coping. But then again, rationalising can also be an avoidance strategy and thus counter-productive for survivors.

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<sup>690</sup> Mr. Hlabangana, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>691</sup> Pseudonym

<sup>692</sup> Mr. Hlabangana, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>693</sup> MaMpofu, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>694</sup> Mama ka Zonda, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

Most participants in the research stated that poverty and socio-economic strife limits their coping ability. They observed that idleness, milling around, and scarcity breed discontentment, and make one in that time ponder unnecessarily long over past injustices and violations. Jonah prefers to keep busy tilling the land and focusing on his wife and kids, so that he does not have time to remember.<sup>695</sup> In addition, Jonah referred to education as being a coping mechanism. I understood this mostly to refer, not necessarily to education being a coping mechanism in itself, but rather that education enables one to live a better socio-economic life which protects one from poverty – as the lived realities of scarcity bring the violations of Gukurahundi and many lost opportunities to mind.

In our lives here ... we even run out of money to go and buy matches. Can you imagine! How much is a box of matches? ... it is only ten cents [or the equivalent of one South African Rand]. Sometimes you just cannot put that money together. Here in the rural areas there are no opportunities for employment.<sup>696</sup>

The quote above ties in with Waldorf's idea that victims of gross human rights abuses often prioritise present, more "immediate" economic needs such as medical care, housing, education, employment, and clothing.<sup>697</sup> In this regard, various people stated that they survived Gukurahundi (at the time), and continue to cope today, when they have the support of, or are financially boosted by, remittances and gifts which come from relatives residing in bigger urban cities in Zimbabwe, as well as in the diaspora – particularly in South Africa. So efficient has the cross border taxi (transport) industry become, that groceries (and money) are delivered all the way to rural homes, which are often considered remote, from South Africa and Botswana. Older participants stated that their children in South Africa generally bear this burden. Rasta reiterated that despite the fact that he has not returned to Zimbabwe because of Gukurahundi, he is still expected to take care of family back home, and therefore sends remittances as often as he can.<sup>698</sup> In this regard, there is an intergenerational exchange, whereby the younger age cohorts are having to sustain first generation survivors of Gukurahundi through remittances and provision.

Lastly, faith/spiritualism – across a variety of formal and informal religious worldviews and dispensations – was cited by almost everyone as the reason behind why they continue to survive the aftermath of Gukurahundi.

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<sup>695</sup> Mr. Jonah Dube, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>696</sup> Ibid

<sup>697</sup> Lars Waldorf, "Anticipating the Past: Transitional Justice and Socio-Economic Wrongs" *Social and Legal Studies* 21(2) (2012), 179.

<sup>698</sup> Mr. Rasta, November 2015. Interviewed in Johannesburg, South Africa.



I gave myself over to faith and told myself that God allowed whatever happened to happen. It is in the past ... and I should look to the future. That is how I understand the occurrence, and that is how I continue to live amidst the trauma.<sup>699</sup>

Gogo MaMoyo proceeded to say:

God gave me a boldness ... yes ... a boldness ... at Guta Ra Mwari. Many people blame it (or bad mouth the church calling it a cult) ... but shame ... the church moves powerfully. Look now ... the work that I do ... people with two hands cannot do it. I use this one hand that I have ... to go and order goods from the market to sell.<sup>700</sup>

Mama Ka Zonda said:

I do have bad dreams about Gukurahundi on occasion – but with time it will pass. That is what led me to go and join *amaPostori*.<sup>701</sup> You just tell the leaders your problem, and they help you through it all – usually through prayer. As a result I never remove my white *duke* on my head. It is a sign of the church which gives me hope.<sup>702</sup>

There were a myriad of faith(s) highlighted or represented in this study; however, for purposes of brevity, I have simply highlighted the two participants above.

### 8.3 What Would Survivors Like to See Being Done about Gukurahundi?

The answer, which is always given as a first priority by the majority of participants concerning what they would like to see being done about Gukurahundi, is that ideally *the government will acknowledge the occurrence, apologise over it, and more than that, give a “truthful” account of its actions*. Currently, participants believe that the government is concerned with intellectualising and debating over the atrocity; speaking through justifications; and in some cases, simply twisting the truth. This speaks to survivors need, amidst state denials and silence, to see their pain and experience acknowledged by the government – even if at the least, it is to state that Gukurahundi did happen. In this regard, part of the “many different” truths, which participants highlighted, included the need to see ZAPU as a liberation movement being spoken about honourably and returned to the mainstream, in recognition of its contribution.

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<sup>699</sup> Gogo MaMoyo, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>700</sup> Gogo MaMoyo, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>701</sup> Amapostori – sometimes referred to as white garment churches – are a prevalent faith in Zimbabwe. Amapostori will carry thin staffs similar to those which were used by the apostles of Jesus Christ.

<sup>702</sup> Mama ka Zonda, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

Sarkin demonstrates that several apology and acknowledgement-seeking processes for incidents such as Gukurahundi are not peculiar, as globally this continues to happen.<sup>703</sup> He highlights specific cases such as Armenia's continuous demands to Turkey to "apologise and compensate for those genocidal events"; along with Spain's calls to deal with violations which happened during the civil war (1936–1939) to date; as well as persistent calls from various actors over the events of World Wars I and II.<sup>704</sup>

A lack of acknowledgement of Gukurahundi-impacted participants lives in very real ways. For instance, Sis' Sipho's struggle to obtain a birth certificate (as has already been highlighted in this thesis) was that every time she tried to procure one, government officials working with birth registrations would ask her for her parents' identity documents. As she had been going to these offices severally over the years, she reiterated that these documents no longer existed, as her parents were killed by the Gukurahundi army; and that the burning down of their hut meant all documentation was destroyed in the process. Officials registering births in these same hotspots, in which Gukurahundi had occurred (in her case Lupane), always turned her away citing that "as far as they were concerned – officially Gukurahundi did not exist, and therefore that she could not come and cite such a reason for not having any paperwork – nor for failing to bring a parent in person with her to vouch for her birth lineage". Sis' Sipho notes that they hushed her much, fearing for her, and told her to stop insisting on this story as she could be arrested for speaking "lies" about the president. Examples such as this are clear cases of state denial, and highlight, along with other examples, the need for Gukurahundi to be acknowledged as having occurred.

There cannot be reconciliation without truth, the truth has to come out, it has to be acknowledged. I think forgiveness has to be asked for, and [only] then, it will be given.

The wounds of the heart heal much more slowly than the wounds of the body.<sup>705</sup>

In this regard, and as part of acknowledgment, there was an exceedingly common view amongst participants that "*something-like*" *South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission needs to be replicated in Zimbabwe*, as it will create opportunities for this 'truth telling'. Incidentally, Moyo states that leading transitional justice authors knowledgeable on Zimbabwe currently refer to

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<sup>703</sup>Jeremy Sarkin, "Should Reparations for Massive Human Rights Abuses perpetrated on African victims during colonial times be given?" in I. Vanfraechem, A. Pemberton and F. Mukwiza Ndahinda (eds), *Justice for Victims: Perspectives on Rights, Transition and Reconciliation* (Routledge, 2014), 93

<sup>704</sup> Jeremy Sarkin, "Should Reparations for Massive Human Rights Abuses perpetrated on African victims during colonial times be given?" in I. Vanfraechem, A. Pemberton and F. Mukwiza Ndahinda (eds), *Justice for Victims: Perspectives on Rights, Transition and Reconciliation* (Routledge, 2014), 93 - 94

<sup>705</sup> Dieter Scholtz, a long residing Catholic Bishop in Zimbabwe, as interviewed by P. Godwin, *The Fear: The Last Days of Robert Mugabe*. (United Kingdom: Pan Macmillan, 2010), 123.

and write about a 1985 truth commission which happened because of Gukurahundi - which most Zimbabweans do not know about.<sup>706</sup>

Participants throughout insistently conveyed a romanticised notion about what such a commission can achieve. The South African TRC has many positives about it, including its strong nation-building and reconciliatory rhetoric, which it encouraged amongst citizenry. However, it also has shortcomings, which include the elaborate but ill-suited information management system<sup>707</sup> the controlled vocabulary of which altered survivor testimonies.<sup>708</sup> Furthermore, the various levels of truth(s) sought after by the TRC were sometimes in conflict with each other. Another shortcoming was its tight political mandate, which left out interlinked social and cultural occurrences during apartheid.<sup>709</sup> More significantly, the contexts in the two nations, whilst similar, were/are also very different socio-economically, culturally, and politically. For example, the historical context which finally led to the TRC in South Africa, along with the timing of such (in 1994), was planned around the need to unite the new nation. One questions the possibility of having such a commission in Zimbabwe, over 30 years later after Gukurahundi, and when several other factors are at play today, such as the fact that key participants and witnesses have since passed away; that documents have been destroyed or embargoed; and that the regime behind the atrocity is still in power. Indeed, Fifth Brigade itself, as one of the key actors involved in Gukurahundi, has since been disbanded.

The timing of memory and transitional justice conversations always matter. Sarkin asks this very question when writing about obtaining justice for the Herero of Namibia. He asks if it is “100 years too late?” but goes on to say that “old matters do not end with the passage of time”.<sup>710</sup> He thereafter cites several cases of countries and communities still seeking justice for a variety of issues, including colonial crimes from as far back as 1900, such as Kenya’s case against the British Ministry of Defence for rape.<sup>711</sup> Admittedly, Sarkin also notes that a lack of funding and documentation (as evidence) means many of these cases do not come to the fore.

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<sup>706</sup> Khanyisela Moyo, “Mimicry, Transitional Justice and the Land Question in Racially Divided Former Settler Colonies” *International Journal of Transitional Justice* (2015), 11.

<sup>707</sup> The TRC’s management system was designed by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (Buur, 2002).

<sup>708</sup> Buur, “Monumental Historical Memory”, (2002).

<sup>709</sup> Buur, “Monumental Historical Memory”, (2002).

<sup>710</sup> Jeremy Sarkin, “Should Reparations for Massive Human Rights Abuses perpetrated on African victims during colonial times be given?” in I. Vanfraechem, A. Pemberton and F. Mukwiza Ndahinda (eds), *Justice for Victims: Perspectives on Rights, Transition and Reconciliation* (Routledge, 2014), 93.

<sup>711</sup> Jeremy Sarkin, “Should Reparations for Massive Human Rights Abuses perpetrated on African victims during colonial times be given?” in I. Vanfraechem, A. Pemberton and F. Mukwiza Ndahinda (eds), *Justice for Victims: Perspectives on Rights, Transition and Reconciliation* (Routledge, 2014), 93 – 94.

Participants state that such an envisaged “South Africa-like” truth commission would be specifically for Gukurahundi matters – and herein lies a problem with such ideas already. It could be argued that a truth-telling occasion needs to be done for Zimbabwe as a whole, both in a backward-looking manner, which could go as far back as to include the Ian Smith government’s violations, as well as in a forward-looking manner to include some of Robert Mugabe’s other travesties such as Operation Murambatsvina and MDC killings of 2008, amongst other examples.<sup>712</sup> There is likely to be an issue of contention with regard to the parameters (time frame) of such a truth commission. Additionally, truth commissions as a venture are expensive – as noted in the case of Sierra Leone, where raising money for their TRC and Special Court internationally was a process in itself and consumed much time and energy.<sup>713</sup> Lastly, Mama ka Zonda asks a more pertinent question about such a truth commission. “Are we to believe that the same government that brought people to kill – is the same government that will now bring peace through this commission?”<sup>714</sup> Essentially, Mama ka Zonda is drawing attention to the reality that the ZANU government is not suited to be at the helm of such initiatives because of the glaring conflict of interest.

I do not believe the government is likely to acknowledge their role in Gukurahundi, as an acknowledgement means that they have to assume some sort of responsibility towards compensating the victims. It would also likely besmirch their reputation as a ruling party and open them up to various lawsuits globally in the process.

A great number of *participants were clear about the fact that they wanted justice meted towards select leaders* such as Robert Mugabe, Emmerson Mnangagwa, Perence Shiri, and Enos Nkala (who is now deceased), amongst other people, as this would take away the culture of impunity which currently exists. This word “justice” specifically was used quite often and referred to always in English – and never any other local language – which is possibly representative of the lobbying and advocacy that is currently pushing a justice agenda. It provides evidence of human rights discourses framing how people grapple with post-Gukurahundi legacies and possible expectations. Whereas justice and specifically transitional justice<sup>715</sup> as a discourse looks at a bevy

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<sup>712</sup> Zimbabwe’s Operation Murambatsvina : the Tipping Point? Pretoria: International Crisis Group, 2005.

<sup>713</sup> Kirsten Ainley, Rebekka Friedman and Chris Mahony, “Transitional Justice in Sierra Leone: Theory, History and Evaluation” in *Evaluating Transitional Justice: Accountability and Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp.241-264 (this particular citation is pg 252 – 253).

<sup>714</sup> Mama ka Zonda, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>715</sup> Transitional Justice “refers to the set of judicial and non-judicial measures which have been implemented by different countries in order to redress the legacies of massive human rights abuses” (The International Centre for Transitional Justice ICTJ on [www.ictj.org](http://www.ictj.org)). Transitional justice is ultimately concerned with victims of violence. The drivers of transitional justice therefore tend to include a diversity of actors, such as the state; (global) civil society; Humanitarian institutions; local communities and legal jurisdiction at national, regional and international levels.

of possible solutions under a “justice banner”, it is clear that in the specific instance of Gukurahundi, this word was used to mean only one recourse, which is retribution – where the sought after retribution in this case entails going to the courts and relying on international justice systems under international law to do what cannot currently be achieved in Zimbabwe. For instance, Swarts highlights that “justice” is a wide term covering ideas such as compensatory justice; retributive justice; redistributive justice; as well as restorative justice (also known as reconciliatory justice), amongst others.<sup>716</sup> It is interesting how in this specific case the word “justice” is used by participants synonymously to mean trials through the courts; and additionally, that reconciliatory initiatives are not thought of as justice matters (which they are) but are referred to through words such as “healing” or “peace”, and never justice.

With regard to the specific persons responsible for Gukurahundi, mentioned in the paragraph above and as identified by participants, Eltringham, in a similar vein, argues strongly that the principle as well as focus on individual criminal responsibility is intrinsic to recognising and prosecuting the crime of genocide or crimes against humanity.<sup>717</sup> Mamdani and others are very critical of this focus on individual events and responsibilities.<sup>718</sup> As part of Zimbabwe’s state denial, Gukurahundi is a story, over which the GoZ has gone back and forth about who exactly is responsible for the atrocity, all the while recusing itself from the responsibility. Various actors are blamed for it, including the 400 dissidents and an unruly Fifth Brigade army that went renegade in the field, acting outside of formal instruction and training; with Mugabe, in 2018, proceeding to blame it on the Ndebeles themselves.<sup>719</sup> Part of the denial has been strategic in that it makes Gukurahundi a collective story with every different actor, including journalists and even the international community, being held to account. Eltringham’s assertion is simple: the failure to denounce and prosecute individuals guilty of crimes in a tenacious and transparent manner contributes to the collectivisation of guilt and removes the centrality of individual responsibility.<sup>720</sup> This, he believes, is a stumbling block towards establishing a climate conducive to reconciliation and accountability.<sup>721</sup>

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<sup>716</sup> Mia Swart, “Apartheid reparations: In search of an appropriate remedial theory” *Southern African Public Law*, 28, 1, (2013).

<sup>717</sup> Eltringham, Nigel. *Accounting for Horror: Post-Genocide Debates in Rwanda*. London, Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press, 2004

<sup>718</sup> Mamdani, *Lessons of Zimbabwe*, (2015)

<sup>719</sup> Mugabe interview with Dali Tambo blamed the Gukurahundi Army (2 May 2013) <https://youtu.be/PU9V5E610Bc> ; Mugabe Presser with SABC 2018 blamed the Ndebeles (15 March 2018) <https://youtu.be/2f6akTpiHo>

<sup>720</sup> Eltringham, Nigel. *Accounting for Horror: Post-Genocide Debates in Rwanda*. LONDON; STERLING, VIRGINIA: Pluto Press, 2004

<sup>721</sup> *Ibid.*

A handful of participants, such as Gogo MaMoyo, said that *they require compensation* – mainly financial compensation, for them and their future generations – so that they can be given an opportunity to survive socio-economically, with Gukurahundi's actions having impoverished them. To this end, Swarts states that compensatory (or corrective justice) is backward-looking and concerned with "placing the harmed party in a place where they would be socio-economically and politically had the (Gukurahundi) harm not occurred".<sup>722</sup> She refers to this as the construction of a "relevant possible world".<sup>723</sup> Naturally, compensation can never restore exactly what was lost, nor even the equivalent in most cases. Financial compensation could also be seen as a way of "buying people off", so that certain politicians can "avoid" taking responsibility for their past actions during and after Gukurahundi.

Participants noted that every time they try and make such compensation suggestions or else pursue it with government departments, such as Social Development, they are shut down (sometimes by the public themselves) – with all reminding them that the country has an even bigger economic problem and therefore has no money, almost suggesting that they ought to wait for political and economic development to happen in the nation (as a priority) before they can raise such matters. Gukurahundi victims are often expected by fellow Zimbabweans not to pursue financial recompense for the greater good of the nation. In this regard, the phrase "remember Black Friday" abounds.

Black Friday refers to Friday, 14 November 1997, the day that the GoZ made lump sum payments of 50,000 Zimbabwean Dollars (a handsome payment then) to veterans who had fought the liberation war. The economy plunged instantly, with the currency losing 71.5% of its value against the US Dollar, and set the country on a downward spiralling course.<sup>724</sup> Furthermore, the continuous monthly pay-outs of 2,000 Zimbabwean Dollars to these veterans were not sustainable in the long run, and the government, failing to control this situation, had to deal with the brutality of many more veterans who took it upon themselves to take over farms as a means of compensation.<sup>725</sup> The economy has never recovered, and in fact by 2010, the US Dollar and the South African Rand became the formal currencies through which the economy was run.<sup>726</sup> Survivors are warned through debates on Twitter, etc. that taking a deep look into Gukurahundi,

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<sup>722</sup> Mia Swart, "Apartheid reparations: In search of an appropriate remedial theory" *Southern African Public Law*, 28, 1, (2013), 74.

<sup>723</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>724</sup> Tendai Biti, 'Zimbabwe's economy and the causes of the crisis', 2010, accessible on [www.bwpi.manchester.ac.uk/](http://www.bwpi.manchester.ac.uk/).

<sup>725</sup> Tendai Biti, 'Zimbabwe's economy and the causes of the crisis', 2010, accessible on [www.bwpi.manchester.ac.uk/](http://www.bwpi.manchester.ac.uk/).

<sup>726</sup> Gogo Mamoyo... "Apparently there is no longer social services or disability grants available. These monies expired when we changed currencies...when the fluctuating bond became replaced by the USD. Look at that pile of money over there (she points). At the turn of events in Zimbabwe, I was told I was no longer able to use this money. It had expired."

especially requests for compensation, will thus cause further strain on the economy. Some participants under this compensation category, such as Mama Keletso and MaMpofu, did not specifically require financial pay-outs per se, but insisted that other social services, such as free education and free healthcare opportunities, are availed for dependents of survivors, as examples.

Some participants, namely the older generation of participants, said “*iGukurahundi idinga isiko*” – i.e. “Gukurahundi needs to be addressed through our cultural ways”. Intriguingly, these statements were not made by the younger age cohort of participants, across the generational spectrum. This lexicon does not exist in their telling. Hamilton’s study in Natal reveals an interesting trend, which is slightly different from that in Zimbabwe, with the younger “urban” cohort, who are technologically savvy, using public spaces to increasingly engage with what Hamilton refers to as “ancestral conversations”, which many of them endorse.<sup>727</sup> *Isiko* can be translated to mean a number of symbiotically linked words such as culture; tradition; indigeneity; and ancestral or spiritualist ways of dealing with the issue. McNulty draws attention to words such as indigenous, tradition, and cultural, and questions who uses such terms and for what purposes. Authors such as Trouillot, White, Hamilton, and Buthelezi have argued that these ideas of memory as shared through a cultural lens with words such as traditional/ancestral, etc. abounding are fluid words whose meaning and use or practice changes in different contexts.<sup>728</sup> Buthelezi’s contribution is that these words make dangerous assumptions about unified ideas of black ancestralism as an example. Albeit *Isiko* are representations of a worldview specific to various persons and contexts. They matter to participants because they explain the lens through which certain people understand Gukurahundi; the way they want it to be memorialised; as well as communicate the healing that they deem necessary for themselves.

Mama Keletso said:

*Into le ifuna isintu mntanami. Kumele sibuyele eNjelele sithethelele kwabaphansi.* [This thing needs tradition my child. We need to go back to Njelele (a spiritual shrine in Zimbabwe) and appease our ancestors].<sup>729</sup>

Jonah Dube stated:

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<sup>727</sup> “Many who engage the ancestral are young urban people, savvy, connected and thoroughly contemporary in their outlook. Facebook pages for a variety of kinship groupings (see for example, AmaHlubi Amahle, or the Facebook page for Mkhize Youth Rocks, a group “specifically made for the Mkhize youth and the Mkhize’s by heart...by birth...by blood...by marriage...by friendship”) have proliferated, and are the site of animated discussion of the past. More specifically, it is the izithakazelo, address names that invoke the ancestors, which are of consuming interest”.

Hamilton, “Archives, Ancestors and the Contingencies of Time”. In Press. p 11

<sup>728</sup> Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*; White, *African Voices*, and Hamilton “Archives, Ancestor and the Contingencies of Time”.

<sup>729</sup> Mama Keletso, April 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

[W]e want the bones of our parents and family members back. We want to bury them. *Abaphansi bazondile* [Those that are deceased are angry]. As a result, my life has been difficult – riddled with failure, death and poverty – because the blood is heavy upon this land. This is why it does not rain anymore. The blood of the dead speaks.<sup>730</sup>

Fontein discusses this matter where he highlights that in Zimbabwe, there is a strong view that deceased persons who have not been given proper funeral rites can become ‘dangerous and frightening spirits known as Ngozi’.<sup>731</sup> In this regard these spirits haunt persons responsible for their death, family and friends, and can even bring calamity to communities and a nation at large.<sup>732</sup> In his study about the bones of deceased war veterans of the second Chimurenga war, participants told Fontein that Zimbabwe as a nation is haunted, and that this can be seen through aspects such as drought, political and socio-economic crises, the HIV/AIDS pandemic along with other ills, because of spirits which remain unappeased.<sup>733</sup>

Mama Keletso’s contribution to the discussion are her assertions that at the commencement of the liberation struggle, both Nkomo and Mugabe fulfilled *isiko* for their liberators, who were often protected through prayers, along with other rituals, performed by spiritual representatives on their behalf at the Njelele shrine. Keletso asserts that in her experiences as a ZAPU liberationist, she remembers these prayers and rituals being made for freedom fighters (herself included) as rooted in *isiko*. She bemoans the fact that once the African nationalists won the country, these same leaders neglected or else never went back to complete the necessary rituals which had paved the way for their success and for a liberated Zimbabwe in the first place. She thus believed that *isiko* would fix the myriad issues facing the country.

Another story rooted in *isiko*, as narrated by participant Tshabalala, is about a former member of the Fifth Brigade army, who has sleepless nights to date, because he is tormented by images and sounds, where he vividly sees and hears the people whom he bayoneted fall into Bhalagwe.<sup>734</sup> As a means to find some peace of mind, and as an appeasement towards these harmed spirits, the former soldier eventually went to a renowned spirit medium from Mozambique. Together, with a couple of witnesses (six in total), the entourage returned to Bhalagwe mine with a talking chicken (which spoke in the voice of a specific man whom the soldier had killed in the past, in the line of duty); and whose body supposedly still lies in Bhalagwe. With the spirit medium in tow, the tortured Gukurahundi soldier was given some ritualistic instructions about what he needed

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<sup>730</sup> Mr. Jonah Dube, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>731</sup> Joost Fontein, “Between the Tortured Bodies and resurfacing bones: The politics of the Dead in Zimbabwe”, *Journal of Material Culture* 15, No. 4 (2010), 426 – 427.

<sup>732</sup> Fontein, “Between Tortured Bodies”, 427.

<sup>733</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>734</sup> Mr. Tshabalala, April 2016. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.



to do to purge himself so that the tormenting spirit would leave him alone. Thus the exorcism began. Unfortunately, the exercise, whilst carried out (at Bhalagwe by night), was not successful – simply because (according to Tshabalala) the talking chicken told them that the ritual had to be completed by dawn in order for it to work. The tortured soldier was not able to fulfil all the requisites and rituals in time, and once the first rays of the sun came out, the talking chicken died.

The importance of this story highlights that the memories surrounding Gukurahundi in this regard are inevitably made through the viewpoint and practices enshrined by this specific community of people, and are an integral part of a worldview from which memories are articulated. Ntsimane refers to tellings such as this as an integral part of understanding the African worldview.<sup>735</sup> Buthelezi's offering that "the terms 'Western' and 'African' are so vague and imprecise that they close off articulation of what it really is that we are talking about, noting that 'the false opposition of Western and African is unable to delineate where the African stops, and where the western begins'.<sup>736</sup> In this regard, the author notes that ideologies of the purity of African cultural worldviews are futile.<sup>737</sup> The survivors are not likely to be arguing about the purity of any culture, as much as they are highlighting that this is one way to deal with the matter. It would appear that *isiko* is not mutually exclusive to other ways of addressing the legacies either.

Regardless of the various ideas which participants shared about what they would like to see being done as a means to addressing Gukurahundi, a large majority asserted that much of this is wishful thinking as they believe that Gukurahundi will never be addressed by the current government – and that it is no longer a venture worth investing in emotionally, as such thinking has led to many disappointments in the past. It was stated that one way of coping is to avoid giving oneself hope. Gogo MaMoyo recollects numerous self-funded trips made to Harare in a bid to secure financial compensation for her ordeal. She notes the amount of money, along with the time, she used in such a quest, which was all in vain, as she hardly ever got an audience, and whatever reassurances were given to her were never fulfilled.<sup>738</sup> In fact, she asserts that many of these trips to Harare made her a target, as she occasionally received visits thereafter from people whom she did not know, who often came to speak to her about her story asking many questions – although she did not know the reasons behind this questioning. Thus, participants do not believe that the

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<sup>735</sup> Ntsimane, "Why should I tell my Story", 112 - "I would add that culture, at least for Africans, is inextricably connected to the spirit world. For most black people, even those who are confessed Christians, the spirit world, which Western people often dismiss as superstitious, is a lived reality. Interviews dealing with topics such as misfortune, failure, marriage, sexuality, sickness and death are explained in relation to the spirit world".

<sup>736</sup> Buthelezi, "We Need New Names Too", 591-592.

<sup>737</sup> Buthelezi, "We Need New Names Too", 591.

<sup>738</sup> Gogo MaMoyo, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

government is best placed, nor willing to address these issues. The section below highlights what the government says it has pursued as a means to address Gukurahundi. Most of this has been touched on through various parts of the thesis, and will be discussed briefly.

## 8.4 Government and Their Notions of Justice?

At the end of liberation, and in paving the way for Zimbabwe, Ian Smith, Joshua Nkomo, and Robert Mugabe all sat at *Lancaster House in 1979* to discuss the way forward. Amongst other deliberations it is noted that:

Significantly, there was no discussion whatsoever in the Lancaster House talks about the need for a truth telling.<sup>739</sup> The assumption of all parties was that the horrors of the past two decades would simply be swept under the carpet. What drove the entire process was the desire to end a ghastly war; no doubt the understanding that all had committed atrocities resulted in this unstated consensus that immunity from prosecution be granted to all. It was to be one of the worst legacies of Lancaster House.<sup>740</sup>

This means that at the formation of Zimbabwe, and not solely at the hand of Robert Mugabe, but including other key leaders and parties involved in the liberation struggle, the precedence for justice was set such that matters of mass violence would be left unaddressed.

Moyo refers to this as the “*forgive and forget*” policy adopted in response to the violations committed by both colonialists and liberation movements during the colonial era.<sup>741</sup> In a similar vein, Murambadoro discusses Robert Mugabe’s 1980 speech of “let bygones be bygones” as reconciliation by prescription to amnesia.<sup>742</sup> Bygones and forgiveness discourses do often unintentionally entrench forgetting, and it tends to deny survivors the right to feel anger and rage at perpetrators.

For Gukurahundi specifically, the *Unity Accord* is often cited as the document which ended the atrocity and paved the way forward. The Unity Accord is a short document with ten agreement points which Mugabe and Nkomo settled on, all the while making these and other decisions

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<sup>739</sup> Unlike in South Africa, the issue of truth, justice and a reconciliation commission or process was not even part of the agenda.

<sup>740</sup> Coltart, *The Struggle Continues*, 106 – 107.

<sup>741</sup> Moyo, “Transitional Justice and the Land”, 11.

<sup>742</sup> Murambadoro, R. *The Politics of Reconciliation in Zimbabwe : Three Times failure – Will the Fourth Time Count?* Kujenga Amani. 2017.

without including the grassroots.<sup>743</sup> Nothing about it is unitary – except for the fact that ZANU gained everything and achieved a one-party state in the process, as PF-ZAPU eventually folded into ZANU-PF, in 1987, after the agreement’s signing. The Unity Accord was not properly executed, and it failed to address the root problems between the two factions, which stem way back into the 1960s.<sup>744</sup> The Unity Accord is an example of moving on too quickly, and not giving enough time to the due processes which healing and reconciliation require. Mashingaidze notes that reconciliation requires, as its foundation, the recognition of suffering – which the Unity Accord intrinsically does not do.<sup>745</sup> Furthermore, it is not comprehensive enough as a document and does not prioritise the victims, while deliberately granting amnesty to the 3,500 members of the Fifth Brigade army – once again protecting those who had committed crimes, at the expense of victims and the citizenry’s need for justice and reparations. Lastly, Mashingaidze notes how the political and the personal in Zimbabwe are intertwined, and highlights that the death of Joshua Nkomo on 1 July 1999, for most persons marks the “unofficial” termination of the Unity Accord, as one of the co-signed was no longer there to uphold his end of the deal.<sup>746</sup>

In reverting to the discussion on *amnesties* and their role in Gukurahundi, Eppel highlights that “the 1988 amnesty was one in a long line of amnesties since 1979 and is part of an established pattern of perpetrators being pardoned at the expense of victims”.<sup>747</sup> She goes on to say that by the year 2000, Zimbabwe had issued more than five amnesties, thus covering up the brutal acts the state meted out to its citizens. Whenever participants have tried to seek justice for Gukurahundi, they are told that the matter can no longer be dealt with as several amnesties were already granted for all armed personnel. In this regard, amnesties are a form of silencing as it can be assumed that the issue at hand can no longer be addressed once clemency has been given.

The Dumbutshena Commission on the Entumbane Uprisings<sup>748</sup> and the *Chihambakwe Commission of Enquiry Report on the Gukurahundi massacres* – both undertaken in the 1980s as responses to accounts of mass violence – have never been released, with access to them closed till today. Despite repeated requests from pressure groups requesting the release of these papers, the

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<sup>743</sup> Mashingaidze, T. The 1987 Zimbabwe National Unity Accord and its Aftermath: A case of Peace without Reconciliation. IN *From National Liberation to Democratic Renaissance in South Africa*. (2005), 86.

<sup>744</sup> Mashingaidze, “Zimbabwe National Unity Accord”, 86 – 87.

<sup>745</sup> *Ibid.*, 86

<sup>746</sup> *Ibid.*, 87

<sup>747</sup> Eppel, “Gukurahundi the Need for Truth and Reparations”, 50.

<sup>748</sup> In the Entumbane Uprisings ZANU-PF and PF-ZAPU military personnel - incorporated into the new Zimbabwean National Army turned their guns on each other. The Dumbutshena Commission was an investigation into this occurrence – which preceded Gukurahundi by a few months.

Minister of Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, in March 2002, stated that the Dumbutshena document “disappeared”.<sup>749</sup>

In a similar vein, Zimbabwe’s Human Rights Commission Act of 2012 [chap. 10:30], along with Zimbabwe’s new Constitution approved ahead of the 2013 elections, prevents commissioners from dealing with any political violence committed before 2009 and grants amnesty to human rights abuses committed before this time; thus ensuring that Gukurahundi crimes cannot be tried within Zimbabwe. The 2013 Constitution ensured that the president would never be able to be held to account as chap. 6:11 on presidential immunity states that:

Except with the leave of the Constitutional Court, no civil or criminal proceedings may be instituted against the President in his or her personal capacity for things done or omitted to be done before he or she became President or while he or she is President.

In this regard, Gukurahundi crimes cannot be tried within Zimbabwe. Two presidents mentioned by participants as having personal responsibility for Gukurahundi – i.e. former President Robert Mugabe and President Emmerson Mnangagwa – are thus protected by the Constitution from prosecution.

The Organ of National Healing, Reconciliation, and Integration (ONRHI) emerged after the formation of the transitional inclusive government of ZANU-PF (Robert Mugabe), MDC-T (Morgan Tsvangirai), and MDC-N (Welshman Ncube), negotiated in 2008, as part of the stipulation of the Global Political Agreement (Article VII). In this regard, Eppel connotes that from the onset there was no real willpower from the inclusive government, as the facilitator of the GPA agreements - Thabo Mbeki, had to promote the need for a ‘clause which dealt with past political violence’ as the suggestion did not come from the political parties themselves.<sup>750</sup> The aim of ONHRI was to “recognise formally the social injustices of the past and promote respect for human rights”.<sup>751</sup> ONHRI was not successful, with several reasons cited, including lack of government willpower; lack of structure, owing to an unclear mandate that located government at its centre, whereas ONHRI was meant to be an independent body; as well as the conflict of interest for ZANU-

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<sup>749</sup> Eg <https://www.change.org/p/zimbabwe-government-of-national-unity-release-the-chihambakwe-and-dumbutshena-reports>

Eg <https://www.thestandard.co.zw/2012/01/28/group-demands-Gukurahundi-reports>

<sup>750</sup> Shari Eppel, “Repairing a Fractured Nation : Challenges and Opportunities in Post - GPA Zimbabwe” In Brian Raftopoulos (ed.), *The Hard Road to Reform : the Politics of Zimbabwe’s Global Political Agreement*, (Harare, Zimbabwe: Weaver Press, 2013), 212 -214.

<sup>751</sup> Murambadoro, “The Politics of Reconciliation in Zimbabwe”, (2017).

PF, which as a party is largely complicit in numerous abuses.<sup>752</sup> ONHRI consultations resulted in the drafting of its replacement via the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) Bill.<sup>753</sup>

President Mnangagwa signed into law the NPRC Act on 5 January 2018.<sup>754</sup> The NPRC's mandate is to ensure post-conflict justice, healing, and reconciliation, in accordance with Amendment (No.20) Act of 2013 Chapter 12, Part 6, Sections 253–253. It is interesting to note that the NPRC has taken a stronger stance on select words and actions such as “healing”, “reconciliation”, and “peace”, along with sentiments of “moving forward” and “forgiving and forgetting” – more than it has focused on the words “truth” or “justice”. Barnes notes that in the past, “reconciliation” was always a term in Zimbabwe which was interpreted and tended to be used when referring to matters of conflict between the minority “white” and majority “black” populace.<sup>755</sup> Therefore, the proverbial “black-on-black” issues, which I discuss in chap. 4, were never referred to as “reconciliation” in the past, but instead were constantly termed “unity” matters. It is interesting to see that in the last decade, the language is changing, with reconciliation back in the mainstream.

Admittedly, even as the word “reconciliation” is currently brandished in initiatives such as ONHRI and NPRC, it is clear that the basic tenets expected in reconciliation are not being fulfilled. Huyse states that:

If the victims in a society do not feel that their suffering has been acknowledged, then they are not ready to put the past behind them. If they know that the horrible crimes carried out in secret will always remain buried then, they are not ready for reconciliation.<sup>756</sup>

Based on this, it would appear that the politics of naming are at play – where select words are carefully being used; and yet the practicalities of acknowledgement of suffering, as well as processes of seeking buy-in from survivors for these initiatives, are not being carried out. These lacklustre initiatives by a complicit government to address past injustices, along with the lack of political will to see these matters resolved, has resulted in justice (in its wide ambit) not being fulfilled.

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<sup>752</sup> Murambadoro, “The Politics of Reconciliation in Zimbabwe”, (2017). See also Shari Eppel, “Repairing a Fractured Nation : Challenges and Opportunities in Post - GPA Zimbabwe” In Brian Raftopoulos (ed.), *The Hard Road to Reform : the Politics of Zimbabwe’s Global Political Agreement*, (Harare, Zimbabwe: Weaver Press, 2013), 212 -214.

<sup>753</sup> In accordance with section 251 of the 2013 constitution of Zimbabwe. [www.nprc.org.zw](http://www.nprc.org.zw).

<sup>754</sup> NPRC Act Chapter 10:32 on [www.nprc.org.zw](http://www.nprc.org.zw)

<sup>755</sup> Barnes, “Unreconciled Differences: the Limits of Reconciliation”, (2004).

<sup>756</sup> Huyse, “Zimbabwe: Why reconciliation failed”, 26.

The next section briefly draws attention to a few non-governmental or individually inspired justice initiatives currently in place today – as a means to share memories, memorialise, and encourage healing for survivors.

## 8.5 Unofficial Memory/Memorials/Justice Initiatives

Non-governmental organisations such as Tree of Life have concerned themselves with the emotional vestiges communities live with in the aftermath of mass violence. Regardless of attempts to do so on my end, I never managed to attend a Tree of Life workshop, as a significant part of my fieldwork was in April, amidst the harvesting season, and therefore not an ideal time amongst many rural participants to be attending workshops. However, I heard rave reviews about it from participants who had attended the sessions. In this regard, I decided to write about the organisation in this thesis, while noting that there are likely to be several other organisations offering similar services. Tree of Life's vision is to "create a healed and empowered society that puts its energy into processes of peace, recovery and reconciliation".<sup>757</sup> In this regard, Tree of Life "provides community-based mental health and psycho-social support approaches that help people living with trauma to reconnect with self, nature, family and community".<sup>758</sup> MaMpofu noted that Tree of Life came to their rural community at the invitation of residents who had heard about their work. Tree of Life typically holds a workshop with a sizeable number of community members, within their residential vicinity. After a considerable amount of time after the workshop, Tree of Life conducts follow-up sessions – where resources and time permit.

Participants from Gwanda stated that the programme by Tree of Life offered them their first real opportunity of attempting to come to grips with the whole Gukurahundi experience – one which they insist is unforgettable. The Tree of Life workshops are run across the gender spectrum, to avoid notions of "healing" and the "psychosocial" being relegated to matters for girls and women, to the neglect of men – and rather to highlight that violence and emotional distress impacts on all persons in society. Of the workshop, MaMpofu said:

I learnt that a person's life can be likened to a tree. That when cut, after some time it can spring up and become a new fresh tree. As a human being, you might think that the tree died, but one day, maybe after years – you go past the tree only to find that the part that was cut has regenerated – you can't even see where it was cut – it is now a fully-fledged tree.<sup>759</sup>

This echoes in a positive way the social "regeneration" process. Mthombeni states that:

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<sup>757</sup> <http://www.treeoflifezimbabwe.org/>

<sup>758</sup> <http://www.treeoflifezimbabwe.org/>

<sup>759</sup> MaMpofu

I fulfilled a Tree of Life workshop. My wife and I did it on separate occasions. I was fortunate that through this forum, and over 30 years later – I received help. They taught us to heal like a tree. That healing is within yourself. No other person is going to comfort you. One must bandage themselves in the same way that a tree rescues and heals itself.<sup>760</sup>

Unfortunately, only a small group of participants in my research – representing a specific geography – had an opportunity to go through a Tree of Life workshop. Within the specific community in Gwanda itself, there was a high demand for these sessions, with many community members in-line and signing up en-masse for the next workshops – and hoping for an opportunity to undergo these sessions. Overall, the larger pool of participants in the research had not yet received psycho-social support of any kind – not from Tree of Life, nor through any other establishment really. In this regard, the role of faith was still the most dominant source for psycho-social coping, healing, and reconciliation.

Through the creative arts, there is a growing pool of theatre plays which can be watched, which focus on Gukurahundi. I turn to one specifically – because of purposes of accessibility – in Cape Town.

*Uloyiko (The Fear)* is a play performed by a South African advocacy group from the Western Cape, in solidarity with the Gukurahundi movement, who address the injustice through theatre. They believe in the historical and socio-economic as well as political interconnectedness of the two countries and assert that whatever happens in Zimbabwe ultimately impacts on South Africa. It must be noted that several productions of this show have been performed from 2016 to the present day, in both Johannesburg and Cape Town. According to xxx (researcher for the play), a memorable day for *Uloyiko* is 21 March, 2017 (Human Rights Day), when after the play had been performed, a march followed, as an advocacy tool against the occurrence. These plays have tended to attract the presence of (and sometimes keynote presentations by) key political and human rights personnel including Dumiso Dabengwa (current ZAPU President), David Coltart, Baba Joel Silonda, and Chief Khayisa Ndiweni.

Additionally the researcher of this play notes that this South Africa-based group has received several threats on their lives from anonymous “Zimbabweans threatening them not to screen the play”, but they state that they are not scared as South Africans, and will not be threatened on their own South African soil. They thus do not feel bound to many of the silences which the majority of Zimbabweans they meet seem to be. There have been attempts and plans to show the play in

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<sup>760</sup> Mthombeni

Bulawayo, but they have unfortunately not been realised due to some clearance issues and safety concerns whilst in Zimbabwe. It sadly means that many survivors of Gukurahundi have not seen the production. Indeed, none of my research participants had watched it, although the participants in South Africa such as Brian Nyathi, Toto Nkosi, and Jabulani Mpande were looking forward to viewing it at the next screening. I have been fortunate to view it three times, and whilst I think the play is well researched, I was overwhelmed by the protracted scenes of Fifth Brigade brutality which, whilst well-enacted, felt prolonged, and became the overarching theme of the play to the detriment of other complex factors.

Over and above increased academic writing on Gukurahundi as discussed earlier in the thesis, several novels have emanated from this topic. For example, Christopher Mlalazi's *Running with Mother* is a fiction novel, detailing the life of Rudo and her Mother MaMvura, her aunt, along with her cousin, Gift, as they run away from the Gukurahundi army – without anyone really explaining to them the reason behind the brutality and the mass killings.<sup>761</sup> They see a lot of torture and death during this time – including Rudo witnessing her father covered in a sack, beaten, and later forced to burn down his own home. They flee to Saphela mine where they witness bodies being thrown into the mine shaft covertly. The survival of Rudo and her mother is that in speaking Shona, Comrade Finish assumes that they are “one of them”, and are thus allowed into the army truck, where they are driven to Bulawayo to safety by the same Gukurahundi army which killed Rudo's father/ MaMvura's husband.

In a similar vein, Novuyo Rose Tshuma's more recent fiction novel entitled *House of Stone* also details a story based around her character Bukhosi's disappearance, amidst political turmoil and violence at the hand of the government.<sup>762</sup> The interesting aspect about Tshuma's novel, as well as other people writing about Gukurahundi, is that they represent a younger age cohort who did not necessarily experience Gukurahundi. Interviewed during the launch of her book in Bulawayo, Tshuma noted that she had a desire to write a novel inspired by Gukurahundi – especially because of all the silences around the occurrence. She noted that it is was not knowledge that her mother grew up sharing with her, even as she was interested in the occurrence - and this led to her advocacy about it today.

*Exhumations and reburials as truth telling.* Amani Trust – another NGO in Matabeleland, Zimbabwe– details the exhumation processes and reburials which they conducted between 1998

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<sup>761</sup> Mlalazi, Christopher. *Running with Mother*. Oxford: African Books Collective, 2012. <https://muse-jhu-edu.ezproxy.uct.ac.za/> (accessed January 14, 2019).

<sup>762</sup> Tshuma, N. R. 2018. *House of Stone*. Atlantic Books.



and 2002, but which lapsed “when the Zimbabwean government forced this NGO into closure”.<sup>763</sup> Eppel details how the Amani staff was initially made up largely of health professionals who were putting in place “hospital-based counselling to offer treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety and depression” – which Eppel states was in accordance with abundant literature on survivors of torture and organised violence (TOV).<sup>764</sup> However, she notes that:

Whilst symptoms representing these “conditions” could undoubtedly be found if “sought”, Amani staff realised very quickly that survivors themselves do not spontaneously recognise counselling as a basic need in a post trauma situation, and do not always define the worst consequences of violence in terms that coincide with standard psychological diagnostic tools.<sup>765</sup>

Amani Trust found that the significance of appeasing aggrieved ancestral spirits in the Ndebele culture was of central importance. Amani learnt that the community instead prioritised giving the dead an honourable funeral, as well as another ritual performed a year after the funeral – referred to as *umbuyiso* (where the spirit of the dead is officially brought home and inaugurated as an ancestor).<sup>766</sup> Fontein makes similar observations about the importance of ‘bringing home rituals’ from his study which also speaks about the bones of liberation war veterans who died at war in spaces such as Mozambique.<sup>767</sup> In this regard, Eppel details the process of Amani Trust, together with an Argentinian group, called the Argentinian Forensic Anthropology Team (EAAF), who brought their expertise and helped “to exhume bodies as a necessary step to decent funerals and in following appropriate cultural rituals”.<sup>768</sup> This speaks to the *isiko* ideas mentioned earlier in this chapter. Of interest, amongst a growing pool of exhumation processes and teams around the world, is that the EAAF – which has been at the helm of exhumations for Gukurahundi, amongst other spaces - is also quite prominent in similar exhumation research projects within the Southern Africa region. Rousseau, Moosage and Rassool at the University of Western Cape highlight the EAAF as one of the teams that guided their Forensic History Project.<sup>769</sup>

The exhumation process by Amani Trust involved working closely with small communities over years, gathering information, doing forensic work, and taking blood samples of potential family members of the deceased, from amongst the living in the community. In this regard, the initiative

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<sup>763</sup> S. Eppel, “Healing the dead”: exhumation and reburials as truth telling and reclaiming the past in rural Zimbabwe in “Telling the Truths: Truth Telling and Peace Building in Post Conflict Societies. (University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana, 2006), 262

<sup>764</sup> *Ibid.* p263

<sup>765</sup> Eppel, “Healing the dead”, 263.

<sup>766</sup> *Ibid.* 267

<sup>767</sup> Joost Fontein, “Between the Tortured Bodies and resurfacing bones: The politics of the Dead in Zimbabwe”, *Journal of Material Culture* 15, No. 4 (2010), 426 – 427.

<sup>768</sup> Eppel, “Healing the dead”, 264.

<sup>769</sup> Nicky Rousseau, Riedwaan Moosage, and Ciraj Rassool, “Missing and Missed: Rehumanisation, the Nation and Missing-Ness.” *Kronos* 44, no. 1 (2018), 14.

is intergenerational as “the living children of the dead” provide the much-needed DNA which corroborates who exactly the dead are. Koff highlights these processes and details more specifically in her book focused on exhumations across several conflict zones.<sup>770</sup> She states that “in addition to helping authorities determine the identity of deceased people, forensic anthropology has a role in human rights investigations, because a dead body can incriminate perpetrators who believe they will have silenced their victims forever”.<sup>771</sup> Hollander and Gill share similar sentiments as they assert that the bones tell the circumstances which led to the dead dying, as they act as evidence – or as Eppel would note, “the bones break the silence”.<sup>772</sup> For instance, Eppel states that in Sitezi, they began to turn up evidence of burning, and then of burnt bones.

Within an hour of digging, it was clear that there had been gross interference with the human remains here. Charred pieces of femur and other long bones began to emerge, together with cartridge cases and bullets. The grave had been deliberately destroyed. The Argentinians confirmed that the type of burning was consistent with petroleum products of some kind as having been poured over the remains ... within a few months at most from the time of the first burial.<sup>773</sup>

To this, Eppel states that “the EAAF considered this grave to contain clear forensic evidence of gross crimes against humanity – of execution accompanied by an attempt to make the grave clandestine”.<sup>774</sup> Whilst the identification of persons (or rather bones) was prioritised, the more significant goal was to bring community cohesion and healing, as well as to encourage closure through giving the deceased an honourable funeral. Funeral rites include slaughtering animals, drinking beer, eating food, and above all, having community members at the funeral to witness the event. Very few participants in this study such as Hlabangana were involved in this venture. Hlabangana shared knowledge with Amani Trust (based on his memory of days spent as an errand boy to the Fifth Brigade during Gukurahundi) about where he suspected people had been buried, and furthermore, assisted in trying to identify who he thought those specific persons were. He states that

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<sup>770</sup> Koff, Clea. *The Bone Woman : a Forensic Anthropologist's Search for Truth in the Mass Graves of Rwanda, Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo* New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2006.

<sup>771</sup> Koff, Clea. *The Bone Woman : a Forensic Anthropologist's Search for Truth in the Mass Graves of Rwanda, Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo* New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2006. p 8 – 9.

<sup>772</sup> Hollander and Gill, “Every Day the War Continues in my Body”, (2014) . Eppel, “Healing the dead”: exhumation and reburials as truth telling and reclaiming the past in rural Zimbabwe. IN “Telling the Truths: Truth Telling and Peace Building in Post Conflict Societies. University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana, 2006.

<sup>773</sup> Hollander and Gill, “Every Day the War Continues in my Body”, (2014) . Eppel, “Healing the dead”, (2006).

<sup>774</sup> *Ibid.*

I was actually there when Amani Trust dug out the bodies of about 6 people in Gwanda, and just as Eppel writes – I am witness to the intimidation and the administrative processes and challenges that we faced till we completed that task.<sup>775</sup>

Because of these processes (spoken of fondly by survivors who have been privy to them), Sis' Siphos was able to be a part of a ritual in Lupane that eventually saw her parents and other deceased community elders given a decent funeral many years later. She states that this gave her much-needed healing and peace.<sup>776</sup> The fact that the government banned the NGO is a telling point in itself about the importance of this work in the context of state denial. After Amani Trust was banned, some of the work of this organisation was taken over and continued by Ukuthula Trust – which remains one of the more renowned NGOs in Matabeleland addressing Gukurahundi and other socio-economic / political issues within the region.

Moving along to a different Gukurahundi site, “unknown” residents of Lupane have put up what is unofficially referred to as *the Lupane Crosses*. These are a series of simple crosses on the wayside representing physical demarcations and sites where it is believed persons died and are buried, or at least mass graves exist. According to the CCJP report, a legacy of Gukurahundi was that people were not allowed to bury the dead, or mourn them, such that this is a way of bringing recognition to the dead and giving them the dignity and recognition today, which they could not give in the past. Research participants highlighted these memorials, and whilst they seemed to allude to a community “knowing” about which persons specifically erected these crosses, they also in the same breath denied “knowing” who the persons were. In this regard, community members were very protective about the identities of the persons whom they believed had represented the sentiments of the community, by erecting these crosses (or memorials) in the first place. This move was seen in a very positive light by survivors. These crosses are unnamed and therefore do not mention the dead persons specifically or individually. This is done deliberately so. The contention with these Lupane crosses is that as many a time as they have been put up by night, they have as often a time (as their erection) been dishevelled by night. So the community has over the years undergone a process of erecting these crosses, only to see them being torn down or removed by certain “unknown”, but suspected ZANU government elements, after which the community re-erects or replaces the crosses again. Thus the cycle of the memory and memorial wars continues over these crosses.

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<sup>775</sup> Mr. Hlabangana, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>776</sup> Sis' Siphos, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

The next chapter concludes the research and maps the way forward. It will pull the central argument of the thesis, threading together the discussions on state denial, memory, and justice.

## CHAPTER 9. CONCLUSION

### 9.1 Introduction

This chapter offers a comprehensive summary of this oral history PhD thesis. To this end, it speaks to the central argument or question posed in the introduction (chap. 1). The recurrent argument is built around how state denial and produced silences of Gukurahundi have shaped, and will continue to shape, survivor memories and cross-generational legacies; and contribute to justice and political engagement in independent Zimbabwe. This chapter therefore synthesises the main ideas emanating from the various research objectives of the thesis and draws conclusions obtaining from both the theory and survivor stories contained herein. It concludes with a critical reflection on the way forward for Gukurahundi.

### 9.2 Summary of discussions

The thesis began by introducing the reader to the historical and political context in which the Gukurahundi atrocities occurred. In so doing, I drew attention to myriad scholars who have mapped out and debated the historiography of Gukurahundi. Some of the Gukurahundi debates have been around identity politics, such as the making, amongst others, of “Ndebeleness” and “Shonanness”, where it is generally argued by scholars like Stoler, Vail, and Ranger that the making of the tribe (or peoples) is an invention.<sup>777</sup> Yet, on the ground, the long-lasting divisive effects of these inventions have become firmly rooted sentiments amongst the populace. In this regard, a variety of institutions and leaders (both inside and outside Zimbabwe) are central to the ongoing traction of, and beliefs in, tribal and ethnocentric thinking. The historiography of Gukurahundi has also included knowledge about the liberation period that preceded the new Zimbabwe, along with the role of ZAPU and ZANU as nationalist movements during this time.

In a nutshell, Operation Gukurahundi commenced in 1982 and endured until 1987 in the Matabelelands and Midlands provinces of Zimbabwe through the activities of the Fifth Brigade, an army trained by the North Koreans and accountable to former President Robert Mugabe. This army sought to find an estimated 400 armed dissidents, but its actions ultimately resulted in over 20,000 civilian deaths. Many more were tortured, disappeared, and lost their livelihoods, while 400,000 people were brought to the brink of starvation due to targeted food restrictions in the affected provinces. These excessively violent actions, seemingly aimed at neutralising 400

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<sup>777</sup> Stoler, *Epistemic Politics*, 2008; Vail, “Introduction,” 1989; Ranger, *Bulawayo Burning the Social History of a Southern African City, 1893-1960*, 2010.

dissidents, were likely carried out with the aim of politically annihilating ZAPU as an opposition political group in Matabelelands and Midlands. Narratives of study participants, as highlighted throughout the thesis, offer a telling account of what happened during Gukurahundi and in its aftermath.

Admittedly, common Gukurahundi rhetoric – of scholars as well as of advocates – tends to fixate on, and largely limit itself to, accounting for the horrors of the incident and thus focuses excessively on the deaths and tortures associated with the atrocities. In all fairness, it is possible that this is the case because nationally Gukurahundi has not been accorded recognition. Therefore, before advanced debates and ways of looking at Gukurahundi can be developed, graphic details, statistics, and disturbing images are the most fundamental way in which to draw attention to its occurrence. These aspects will always be an important part of the Gukurahundi narration (and are thus not to be neglected). Yet, at the same time, the overemphasis on violence in the discourse on Gukurahundi has resulted in other aspects of the occurrence not being described and explained sufficiently. I therefore believe this study occupies a unique niche, because whilst it refers to the violence of Gukurahundi as a lens (and to an extent retells some of the graphic and emotional violence), it is primarily a study of memory in the post-conflict period. In this regard, it is not a study hinged solely on past events, but rather links Gukurahundi debates to the present-day and to the future.

In the introduction (chap. 1) of the thesis, I set out the research objectives, whose overarching reality is founded on state denial, memory wars, as well as various silences associated with the Gukurahundi occurrence. The Government of Zimbabwe's first response to Gukurahundi in the 1980s was denial, as a means to avoid complicity. Throughout the thesis, various ways in which the government produced silences are mentioned. For instance, its occurrence was neither announced nor spoken of in state-controlled media sources, including print and television.<sup>778</sup> State media concertedly produced and maintained these silences especially between 1982 and 1997, though it has since become harder for the state to regulate discussions on Gukurahundi with the advent of the Internet and social media now offering alternative sources and spaces. State-controlled media thus ensured that dissenting voices did not exist, as well as hid the brutalities from the public domain. The dearth of documentation surrounding Gukurahundi atrocities, as well as the embargoing of documents on it, further sustained the produced silences.

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<sup>778</sup> Chuma, "Liberating or Limiting the Public Sphere", (2004); Additionally Nyarota former Editor of the Bulawayo Chronicle, has been detained 6 times, and his Daily News offices were bombed twice. A ban was eventually put on the paper, and Geoffrey fled to exile in the UK in 2003. Whilst he did not write about Gukurahundi during his tenure as editor, his exposed of other scandals at governmental level such as Willowgate and a myriad of newsworthy matters over the years was deemed to be subversive. Nyarota, G. *Against the Grain: Memoirs of a Zimbabwean Newsmen*. Zebra. 2006.

Seminal works detailing Gukurahundi – including the Catholic Commission on Justice and Peace, and the Legal Resources Foundation’s “Breaking the Silence” report – were not easily available within Zimbabwe’s borders. Copies of “Breaking the Silence”, for example, proliferated in the market only in 2007 – ten years after it was written – upon its publication in South Africa,<sup>779</sup> where it retailed at Exclusive Books and thereby became more easily accessible.

Similarly, the report of the Chihambakwe Commission of Enquiry – a truth commission specifically established to investigate Gukurahundi goings-on between 1983 and 1984 – was not made public. Rather, it has “disappeared”, never having been released to date. The Zimbabwean government argued that the publication of the report would spark violence over wrongdoings. Moreover, the Unity Accord signed between ZANU and ZAPU in December 1987 ending Gukurahundi, resulted in ZAPU being folded into ZANU. Under this accord, armed persons involved in Gukurahundi were by and large granted amnesties by Robert Mugabe as part of “moving forward”.

Legislation, such as the State of Emergency Powers (as enacted in 1963 by Ian Smith) and the Indemnity and Compensation Act of 1975, was upheld by Mugabe into the 1990s as part of the silencing apparatus. Actions undertaken under the State of Emergency Powers varied but included stringent curfews; deliberate use of food shortages against “terrorists” as well as civilians harbouring “terrorists”; transport bans; and ad hoc arrests of “international journalists” and “nationalists” – all without accountability.<sup>780</sup> The Indemnity and Compensation Act protected government ministers and armed personnel from persecution for violations of human rights committed “in good faith” in the line of duty. The existence of such agreements, policies, and legislation at the national level has meant that occurrences such as Gukurahundi are justifiable by the Government of Zimbabwe to regional and international actors, who often turn a blind eye to these occurrences, or at least do not censure the state for its actions.

Eventually, in 1997 (ten years after Gukurahundi), (Now former) President Robert Mugabe, briefly – possibly by way of acknowledging its existence – referred to Gukurahundi as a fleeting “moment of madness”. In this regard, while there was no longer a blatant denial of Gukurahundi, the Government of Zimbabwe under Mugabe chose to change the narrative and diminish its significance by referring merely to it as “a moment”. Mugabe thus continued to engage in the memory wars surrounding Gukurahundi, moving from denial to labelling it as insignificant; and

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<sup>779</sup> Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace. *Gukurahundi in Zimbabwe: A report on the disturbances in the Matabeleland and the Midlands*. London: Hurst and Company. 2007.

<sup>780</sup> Scarnecchia, T. 2011. *Rationalizing Gukurahundi: Cold war and South African Foreign Relations with Zimbabwe, 1981-1983*. (Kronos: Kent State University, 2011), 93.

to deliberately produce silences by not pursuing the issue publicly in any convincing manner after that one statement.

In this historical context, as I have discussed in the introduction (chap. 1), theorists have spent considerable time and energy debating and trying to define what exactly this occurrence – Gukurahundi – is. This has included debate on whether Gukurahundi should be viewed within the parameters of having been a genocide, or not. Meanwhile, according to the Government of Zimbabwe, Gukurahundi was a two-sided war or counter-insurgency against dissident elements who were undermining the state. Other ideas involve Gukurahundi being spoken of through the lens of the political, as opposed to “ethnicity” or “identity war”. Many proponents of this lens, including participants in this research study, believe the political to have been a significant reason behind Gukurahundi happening.

The central argument of this thesis is that amidst the state denial, Gukurahundi memory is very much alive today, over 30 years after the occurrence, and can be traced in various ways. The research study looked, in particular, at memory traces in the post-Gukurahundi period in select reminiscences shared by 30 interviewed survivors of Gukurahundi. In so doing, it sought to bring attention to ordinary people’s stories, as narrated by them, and discuss them against oral history theory. To recap, the research objectives thus were to analyse various memory debates associated with the occurrence of Gukurahundi, such as the nexus between memory and silence; gender and memory; the spatialities of memory; and intergenerational memory. Another important finding that emerged from, and became a constant thread in, the research was the connection between memory and language(s). For example, the language of orality or memory of this study, as shared by participants, was articulated largely (but not solely) in the local language of isiNdebele, which incidentally does not have equivalent words for terms such as “gender”, “genocide”, “trauma”, or “gross human rights violation”. Thus many of the memories are understood, or articulated differently, as they are etched in local knowledge and culture – outside of formal academic or human rights lexicon. I thus believe that one of the key contributions of this thesis is to bring these informal narratives and memories in the local language into the formal narrative.

Linkages between memory, and justice and/or healing/reconciliation have also been made in this thesis, with reference to select initiatives across a variety of actors which were (or are) relied on as a means of surviving Gukurahundi, in lieu of the memories shared. Often, these actors – including survivors themselves – addressed Gukurahundi outside of the Government of



Zimbabwe's arrangements. Finally, this research has aimed to contribute to post-conflict commendations.

The research design and methodology of the thesis have placed emphasis on qualitative research methods, as the emotionally laden experiences of Gukurahundi were better suited to qualitative capturing. As an oral history research project accessed through the telling of memories, theories about the nexus of history, memory, and, to an extent, trauma have been discussed on previous pages. I dwelt lengthily on Cole's idea that official history, which can be bought, packaged, and sold, is not necessarily more factually true in comparison to memory, which is often associated with subjectivity.<sup>781</sup> And so, the history of Gukurahundi according to the state narrative – "a story about power, a story about those who won"<sup>782</sup> – should not take precedence over people's memories in the public space, or be seen as the only type of history, as is currently the case in terms of what has been taught in schools about Zimbabwe overall. Further, some of the strong gleanings that came out of this chapter have to do with the practice of oral history methodology as experienced in fieldwork. There are ethical challenges highlighted around conducting research in conflict-ridden spaces, specifically relating to fear and silencing amongst others. Reflections are made throughout this thesis in this regard.

The linkage between memory and trauma is difficult to make, as we do not know enough about trauma to be able to make generalised observations. Authors such as Leys as well as Radstone have critiqued the over-use, or else problematic use of trauma theory because they believe it gives essentialist explanations for post-violence sufferings which actually require more research.<sup>783</sup> However, through the various ways people share their memories, speculations about trauma traces and triggers can be made from the tellings. These emotional vestiges manifest differently, and in this study, participants communicated feeling anxious, rage, fear, heroism, shame, de-masculinised, abandoned, etc. All of this contributed to a complex retelling in the post-conflict Gukurahundi era.

Snowball sampling was used to identify the interview participants for this study. Ethical considerations guided the study to include the signing of informed consent forms as well as interview release forms. I am thus not able to avail copies for privacy. Throughout the interviews, participants communicated their fears about their information leading back to them and putting

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<sup>781</sup> Cole, "How history is bought, packaged and sold", 2000.

<sup>782</sup> Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 5.

<sup>783</sup> Leys, R. Trauma: A Genealogy. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000); Radstone, S. Trauma Theory: Contexts, Politics, Ethics. 30, no. 1 (March 2007).

them in harm's way. Thus, the confidentiality aspect of the research study largely had to do with keeping the anonymity of participants and finding other ways to ensure that the knowledge as shared by them was not compromised. Chap. 2 has included a section dedicated to the limitations of the research design and methodology, the limitations of the sample, as well as the limitations of self, in which discussion I have noted my positionality and vested interest in this research.

I have highlighted the research demographics and dynamics of participants across age, gender, and geography, along with other factors, where possible. Seven select synopses, as shared in the study, brought several debates and ideas of Gukurahundi to the fore. (1) Thobela Moyo's telling was through the lens of belonging to a younger (or second) generation cohort who left Zimbabwe in his youth and who has now adapted to a life in South Africa, deliberately far removed from Zimbabwe and its struggles.<sup>784</sup> (2) Sis' Sipho's memories evolved around the lived realities of being a child survivor (aged seven) during Gukurahundi, as well as the aftermath of living as an orphan, displaced and without documentation.<sup>785</sup> (3) MaNcube's story highlighted various gendered dynamics at play, especially as she described the Gukurahundi army's interactions with young girls and women, mainly through sexual violation as well as their use of women as "doers" of domestic chores.<sup>786</sup> Conversely, she noted that boys and men experienced different forms of physical violence and torture, where young boys ran errands for the army, including burying the dead. Additionally, MaNcube's interview spoke in detail about her interactions with both dissidents and the army as key actors integral to the Gukurahundi story.

(4) Jonah Dube's deflection or amnesia throughout his telling involved a silencing of his experiences, as he chose not to make any observations about Gukurahundi, nor share any details about the emotional vestiges, but rather dwelt on the socio-economic circumstances which him and his family/community are living under presently.<sup>787</sup> Whilst this can be said of any of the other participants, this narrative gave us glimpses into the complexity of a survivor where we asked: "Why is Jonah not saying what he is not saying?" (5) Gogo MaMoyo, in sharing about being shot in Lupane, reiterated ideas of the disabled, the maimed, or the marked body as a result of violence.<sup>788</sup> She noted the aftermath of living with such constrictions and her struggles to get compensated for Gukurahundi. (6) Toto' Nkosi's telling spoke to ideas of the history of Zimbabwe, memory, and identity.<sup>789</sup> He also discussed at length his observations about intergenerationality

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<sup>784</sup> Mr. Thobela Moyo, May 2014. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

<sup>785</sup> Sis' Sipho, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>786</sup> MaNcube, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>787</sup> Mr. Jonah Dube, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>788</sup> Gogo MaMoyo, December 2014. Interviewed in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

<sup>789</sup> Mr. Toto Nkosi (Toto), June 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

as experienced between him and his children. Lastly, (7) Mthombeni's story, largely located within Bhalagwe mine, was a story based around a prominent site of Gukurahundi memory.<sup>790</sup> He gave us insight into the interlinked discourse of spatiality and memory.

My reflections and observations on the fieldwork experience were initially about my struggle to be accepted by survivors. This resulted in a protracted fieldwork period filled with the processes of negotiation, gaining trust, and finding participants, as well as having to deal with not only the fears and anxieties of interview participants but also those of my own about conducting the research. Erin Jesse's work on conducting fieldwork in a dangerous setting gave me many insights during this time.<sup>791</sup> The topic itself is also emotionally laden, and thus I realised that I had underestimated the willingness of people to open themselves up to sharing these memories; that I was actually not even equipped psychologically to deal with the after-effects of their outpourings. I noted the gendered dynamics and observations of being a female researcher in the field, along with many other gendered tropes that came with navigating the space. Lastly, I reflected on being a Ndebele-speaking person who lives in the diaspora researching fellow "Ndebele" persons and the insider/outsider dynamics associated with this. I drew ideas from the literature on oral historiography in this regard.

Key narratives of research participants about Gukurahundi have been detailed in this thesis. Of particular interest were discussions about language and its influence on Gukurahundi, as well as on Gukurahundi memory. For instance, the fact that "Gukurahundi" is actually derived from a "Shona" phrase which means "the early rain which washes away the rubbish/chaff", brings to mind questions about how the use of the Shona language in this phrase impacts identity politics and how it comes out in the memory telling. Gukurahundi is intrinsically linked to the languages of Ndebele and Shona, with each being key in the memory sharing of participants, which has unfortunately exacerbated the binaries or stereotypes of "Shona" perpetration and "Ndebele" victimhood. This is seen in the language shifts which participants made throughout the study; where they defaulted to speaking in Shona whenever they imitated the Fifth Brigade soldiers. In this regard, memory is ensconced in language. Thus, throughout the thesis, a longer history which spoke to the invention of tribes and identities has been a notable aspect of the story. It must be noted that whilst memory is at times driven by language, memory is not only shaped by the spoken and the written word. Bodies, spaces, and objects, for example, are crucial to understanding how various forms of memory work.

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<sup>790</sup> Mr. Mthombeni, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>791</sup> Jesse, "The Limits of Oral History, 2015.

A key finding of the research was that Gukurahundi is told as a story in continuum – a common occurrence emanating out of oral history theory – where the telling of the event oscillates between the past to the present, as well as the future, thus removing it from its exact occurrence and experience between the years 1982 and 1987. As a result, Gukurahundi memories are often conflated and non-linear, and they lack chronology, following a different temporal logic. These temporal logics vary from chronological and non-chronological logics. This is evident in the way memories of Gukurahundi are shared with others, in the way the liberation struggle and Gukurahundi are spoken of synonymously as if they were one incidence. The compression of these memories was most clear in the fact that participants told their stories in the absence of dates or years and without cumulative coherence of time. MaNcube, for example, experienced Gukurahundi over a period of years, yet she tells her story almost as if it happened over one day or as a once-off instance.<sup>792</sup> In a similar vein, participants referred to Zimbabwe's 2008 food insecurity as Gukurahundi. Often, current affairs and events were infused into Gukurahundi memory, even when they happened long after Gukurahundi.

This continuum is discussed throughout the thesis, especially as phrases such as “Gukurahundi II”, “Gukurahundism”, and “igukurahundi ayipheli” (i.e. Gukurahundi does not end) abound. Gukurahundi II is used to refer to the 2008 violence meted out by ZANU towards the opposition party MDC's leaders and its supporters; where it is believed that the killing was “Gukurahundi-like”, because it sort to annihilate the existence of any other political group. Gukurahundism too refers to ongoing political strife and the quashing of any ideology or body contrary to ZANU's nationalist rhetoric. The phrase “igukurahundi ayipheli” can best be understood through the following examples. For instance, participants who fought the liberation war along with older age cohorts in the study insisted that Gukurahundi be viewed from the historical period of the Rhodesian war, from whence they believe Gukurahundi started, when ZANU and ZAPU politics played out violently in nationalist training camps such as in Mgagao, Tanzania. Other survivors felt that the aftermath of socio-economic circumstances experienced as a result of Gukurahundi legacies, along with ongoing political strife today, are reminders that Gukurahundi will never end.

The impact of Gukurahundi on survivors has included survivors living without documentation; curtailed schooling opportunities; as well as lack of access to medical services and therefore, in some instances, disabled bodies which were not attended to in time. In many families, children were born of rape; and/or child-headed households became the norm for orphaned offspring.

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<sup>792</sup>MaNcube, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

Additionally, forced displacement/migration to places such as Bulawayo, as well as South Africa, resulted in scattered families, along with the proliferation of death, which continues to have long lasting emotional remnants.

The geographical site of Gukurahundi memory moved over time. Whereas earlier the memories largely had a rural presence due to these spaces being the dominant site of the occurrence of the violence, they now occupy other spaces as a result of the movement of orality. Geographical sites include Bulawayo but also the diaspora, where the electronic spatiality of Gukurahundi can be found to be very active currently, with palpable emotions on the Internet and on social media sites. In this way Gukurahundi memory occupies space. The space of the memory comes out of the telling, as the memory occupies the environment it is housed in. It must be noted that I move beyond the narrow definition of sites of Gukurahundi memory as only being geographic spaces, as in fact they often include objects, bodies, Gukurahundi paraphernalia – such as soldiers in army regalia – as well as songs and chants reminiscent of *pungwes* in that time.

Participants gave several reasons behind what they perceived Gukurahundi to have been about, and tended to align these reasons with what their memories of the occurrence are. The idea that it was a planned occurrence and thus intentional, was mentioned. The global politics at play during Gukurahundi were also noted, with it being highlighted that Gukurahundi was an after-effect of larger Cold War politics. In this regard, actors such as South Africa, North Korea, Britain, Russia, etc. make up part of the memory of this story, highlighting that Gukurahundi events have a local, provincial, national, regional, and international reach; and that all these various actors therefore hold importance in future resolutions where Gukurahundi is concerned.

In addition, Gukurahundi memory was discussed as being viewed through the lens of “black-on-black violence” – a problematic apartheid discourse or phrase found in contexts such as South Africa, and yet still referred to as such by participants in these environments where this terminology exists. Participants within Zimbabwe were likely to call it “umbangazwe”, referring to a fight for the rulership of the country between political parties. It must be noted that this same term was used by participants to refer to the liberation struggle synonymously. Lastly, the younger age cohort of participants and advocates used words like genocide and human rights as part of their telling. As highlighted earlier, there is debate on whether Gukurahundi should be viewed as genocide. Most participants in the study saw the labelling of Gukurahundi as a genocide or as something else as inconsequential, and the matter largely as a discussion held amongst select academics and other actors who have the luxury to deliberate upon such issues at length. However, the politics of naming highlighted that some participants, whilst not familiar with the

term genocide, were willing to use it, if it would create international traction and draw attention to the occurrence, with hopes that it can lead to justice.

A key thread in the study was around memory and silences. The Zimbabwean government has avoided complicity in Gukurahundi by maintaining systematic denial, which has caused long-term silences, as discussed earlier. However, the memories that people have of Gukurahundi, which include fear and trauma traces, also result in people silencing themselves. Their fears have been sustained in the long term through continuous state denial and thus contributed to memories of silence. For instance, memories of Gukurahundi are built around the fact that survivors were not allowed to mourn the dead then; therefore, their stories today are shared through these silences and do not contain any narratives about mourning in them. Participants spoke about, and referred to, the deceased significantly, but did not talk about mourning them specifically.

Participants noted that they are silent with regard to who they choose to tell their stories to, as well as selective about what they choose to tell – especially if they perceive that one is an outsider to the story and the context. Being an outsider or an insider can vary from person to person, to include boundaries created around the family, the village, one's social or political network, and "Ndebele" speakers (as opposed to those who are not). Survivors also choose to share their memories variedly, depending on whom they are speaking to and in line with what they think the telling will do for them. Naturally, the prospect of having the Gukurahundi issue being addressed, results in a greater attempt by survivors to share their memories.

Lastly, there are authors such as Buckley-Zistel, whose research focuses on post-genocide Rwanda, who argue that survivor silences are collective chosen amnesia, to ensure that they do not burden the next generation with their sentiments and experiences.<sup>793</sup> This amnesia is a surviving mechanism, i.e. where one silences the existence of Gukurahundi so that they can attempt to live "normally" outside of the atrocities that they went through. Through amnesia, many women chose not to share their memories of sexual violation, nor reveal the circumstances leading to their children being born as a result of rape. This silencing of memory was a means to protect their husbands (partners) from the graphic memory of what happened to them; as well as to encourage cohesive family units. The emotional weight of what many survivors went through disrupted their self-identities and caused intense scarring that was sometimes beyond articulation or coping, and thus silence was chosen. As noted, this silence around memory means

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<sup>793</sup> Buckley-Zistel, "Remembering to Forget", 2006.

that much of Gukurahundi remains without documentation, in the oral or in silence, with key information often lost through this process of self-distillation.

Some intriguing observations about gender and memory, along with gleanings about the sites or spaces of Gukurahundi memory, were made, which seem to closely mirror oral history literature. Gendered observations began with the fieldwork process, during which I already noted the differences in interviewing across gender, along with the variances in cultural capital and etiquette required to engage in these spaces. This included the spaces where the different gendered tellings can be found, along with the lens through which they are told. Authors such as Hofmeyr have noted that oral traditional storytelling changes based on the spatiality the memory is told from at the time.<sup>794</sup> My experiences of spatialised storytelling were very similar to Hofmeyr, but I found that there were more prominent gendered differences in the narratives from rural areas than those from urban areas. Women tended to be associated with sharing collective community stories in private spaces (such as the kitchen), whereas men purportedly shared individual stories in public spaces (such as community gatherings). Intriguingly, most men's stories were around the physical torture which they experienced; whereas the expectation from women was that their emotional abuse, sexual violation, and loss of fathers, husbands, and sons was the paramount story and memory sought from them, to the exclusion of their personal stories.

Throughout the thesis, the occurrence of rape has been "exceptionalised" in the hierarchy of violations experienced by women. Women participants complained that there is an expectation from men within their communities, from researchers, as well as from civil society that they should share these stories openly – as advocacy or "for the greater good" – despite the shame and discomfort it causes them. Incidentally, the word "rape" – along with details about the occurrence of rape – were not shared as part of women participants' memories; whereas men participants easily used the word when talking about girls and women's ordeals from their communities. For women, the word "rape" was left out, and the reader was left to conjecture what happened. The following sentiments from Gogo Thandeka evince this: "The Gukurahundi soldier closed the door and told fellow soldiers to be on guard outside. Sometime later my son was born".<sup>795</sup>

Emotional outpourings in Gukurahundi memories were gendered. On the one hand, survivors like Mthombeni felt bad about crying and for being "undone" during the interview, as it is not expected

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<sup>794</sup> Hofmeyr, "We Spend our Years as a Tale", (1994).

<sup>795</sup> Gogo Thandeka, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

of him to “be so”, because it falls outside of his performance of masculinity.<sup>796</sup> Speaking about the violent past evoked difficult emotions which he could not contain. Additionally, many of his experiences were beyond his ability to take charge over. That level of vulnerability at the hand of soldiers is a difficult reality for him. On the other hand, it was expected that the women would be emotional, as “normatively” they are deemed to be more vulnerable. In this regard, women and children are often stereotypically seen as victims, and men as the perpetrators in the existent binaries of Gukurahundi, even though this is not necessarily true. All of these gendered norms changed the memories which were shared by participants.

Spatial memories included the idea of the maimed body as a site of memory, as, for example, seen through participants, such as Mthombeni, who live with head wounds along with other physical scarring which remains evident on the body.<sup>797</sup> Another spatiality of Gukurahundi memory is the Bhalagwe mine burial site. The sheer existence of soldiers in army regalia; or songs which remind survivors of *pungwe* chants; as well as schools and hospitals where Gukurahundi survivors were at the time of the occurrence, form sites of memory. Additionally, triggers or sites were sensory, such as gunshot sounds or the sight of blood. In this regard, the memory of Gukurahundi as a rural, urban, and even diaspora memory for Zimbabweans now inhabiting different geographies varies: the telling from someone in rural Zimbabwe and another from someone in London are influenced by the spaces they are in, along with the different ways of looking at atrocity found within these spaces.

The research study drew attention to the idea of intergenerational memory through engaging theory, along with bringing learning from participants into the research. There are no homogeneous characteristics of any generation, as there are already difficulties in delineating clear familial and historical generations, to begin with. However, there can be generalised attributes made across generations. For instance, the first generation of any atrocity are generalised as having traits such as being overprotective or smothering towards their offspring; being anxious parents; being mistrustful of authority; and being moody and often depressed, sometimes lacking communication.<sup>798</sup> A second generation is introduced to the study as persons seen succeeding the first generation – they are children of survivors of Gukurahundi, thus born in the immediate years after the war.

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<sup>796</sup> Mr. Mthombeni, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>797</sup> Mr. Mthombeni, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>798</sup> Rowland-Klein & Dunlop, “The transmission of trauma across generations...”, 360, 364 & 369.



As Hirsch has written about the post-memory of this generation, it involves “remembering and experiencing the memory of their parents in a very real and tangible way as if it happened to them – thus constituting memories in their own right”.<sup>799</sup> This generation of belatedness exhibits trauma traces because of the family lineage or story, as in the case of MaMpofu’s son, born after his mother was beaten badly whilst carrying him in the womb.<sup>800</sup> The mother noted that he has physical and emotional symptoms of pain, even without the full knowledge or experience of where the trauma comes from. It was found in this study that the second generation are advocates of Gukurahundi and would like to see it addressed as a matter of urgency. So combative are the views of this second generation, that proponents go as far as asserting that bloodshed or war is the best way to address it.

The first generation cautioned the second against being too impassioned; and urged that they should not wish war upon themselves – given that they were born after war – and that war is not something they should take lightly. The older generation marvelled at the palpable anger experienced by the second generation, which they felt could be dangerous. The platforms and communities of the second generation are largely based online and on the Internet. In this regard, the story of Gukurahundi remains the same; but the articulation of human rights and the medium of the Internet as a site of Gukurahundi memory are a new representation of Gukurahundi by the second generation, different from what it represented to the first generation.

Additionally, contrary to the existence of clear-cut first and second generations posited in many theories, the reality of this study has been that most participants did not neatly fall into either of these categories. Most people are what Suleiman would categorise as the 1.5 generation or else what others would call child survivors of Gukurahundi.<sup>801</sup> In this regard, they are part of a first generation essentially, though they were but children at the time of the occurrence of the atrocity. The category of child survivor itself divides into sub-groups, as a one-year-old and a 14-year-old – whilst both considered children – have different levels of cognisance. One is merely a baby, whereas the other is an adolescent. Intergenerationality is thus complicated. Furthermore, geographic locations can create other sub-groups within a generation. For instance, someone who was 14-years-old in the Matabelelands experienced Gukurahundi, whereas a 14-year-old from Bulawayo during the same time did not – and yet they are from the same historical generation.

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<sup>799</sup> Marianne Hirsch, “The Generation of Post-Memory”, 107.

<sup>800</sup> MaMpofu, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>801</sup> Suleiman, “The 1.5 Generation”, (2002).

There are shortcomings with intergenerational memory theory. Amongst others is the fact that it is difficult to delineate what or who a generation entails, along with other debates about whether trauma is passed on intergenerationally, and how. In a case like Zimbabwe with unresolved psychological legacies, what role does trauma play in this intergenerational transmission?

Indeed, in this study, no one necessarily referred to themselves as belonging to the first or else to the second generation. Most participants referred to themselves as survivors or else as children (or descendants) of survivors. The children made a distinction between themselves and their parents, using the word survivor to specifically refer to their parents and not to themselves. The children of these survivors were thus not speaking to historical generations, but mostly to familial generations (i.e. grandfather, father, and son lineages).

Gukurahundi is incidentally a story of historical generations, more than it is about familial generations, as it was possible for a grandfather, father, and son to all be present at the time of Gukurahundi, living together symbiotically at the same time (as was the case with Jonah Dube and his father).<sup>802</sup> And thus all fell within one generation, even though they were born in different times. It is erroneous to assume that Gukurahundi violations were meted solely towards one familial generation cohort in the absence of others. Furthermore, it is equally inaccurate to believe that generationally memory is passed down in one direction; that the first generationer (or survivor) always passes memory to the second in linear-like fashion, with the second generation always on the receiving end. In this study, for instance, interviewee Jabulani Mpande informed his father about the liberation war as well as Gukurahundi goings-on, showing that memory is multidirectional, even intergenerationally.<sup>803</sup> This links to Rothberg's analysis on intergenerational memory.<sup>804</sup>

There were debates amongst participants about whether it is best to conceal or else to tell the next generation about their experienced "truth". Ideas why this should be done included the notion that if survivors do not tell the stories themselves, other persons (sometimes with ulterior motives) will do so on their behalf, often "distorting" the story. There was also the fear that silence would result in the story being lost with time. It was felt that knowledge of historical occurrences, such as Gukurahundi, are important as part of national memory over and above local memory, as they give the next generation insight into the *modus operandi* of politics in the country; in this

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<sup>802</sup> Mr. Jonah Dube, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe; Dube Senior, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

<sup>803</sup> Mr. Jabulani Mpande, August 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

case, the history of ZANU PF as a party characterised by cyclical violence. Many participants noted that despite their efforts, they worried that the second generation did not always take the matter of Gukurahundi seriously enough, leading Toto Nkosi to highlight that it is best to time the telling of this story.<sup>805</sup> He stated that he only shares his memory with the next generation when they actively take an interest in the topic; he believes this is at a period in their lives when they are young adults, with identity yearnings. Toto Nkosi noted that the story makes more sense to them when it is shared through family experiences and is personalised than when meaningless numbers and stories about strangers are told to them.<sup>806</sup>

As a middle ground, some participants felt that a sharing of Gukurahundi memory, whilst needed, should not be told in its fullness, but rather with selectivity. In so doing their children would not be burdened by Gukurahundi's events. However, it could be argued that when a child comes of age, the full story should be told to them as part of the story of their identity. It was also noted that some stories are untellable as they are debasing or graphic and thus damaging, such as a mother having to share her rape ordeal with her children. Despite these protracted debates about whether to tell the next generation or not, the second generation noted the secrecy of their parents with regard to Gukurahundi, identifying it as frustrating. Many of them thus pieced together the story through other sources (namely, the Internet), or even by eavesdropping on "adult conversations", for example.

The thesis has also highlighted the various ways that participants survived Gukurahundi at the time, in the immediate aftermath, as well as in the long term. Surviving Gukurahundi was largely attributed to sheer providence, with participants stating that they barely escaped death, for one reason or another. Feelings of guilt for being alive when others passed on were noted. Various mechanisms have been used to cope with the aftermath of Gukurahundi, including alcoholism; seeking out traditional rituals or else an ardent clinging on to faith; as well as finding ways to speak out about Gukurahundi amongst family members and in trusted community. Thus community networks with a collective memory or a shared knowing were seen to be a comfort zone, especially where people had lived in the same places over a long time and thus were "insiders" to the community. However, in circumstances where perpetrators lived amongst the community, then that became an impediment to coping.

Participants such as Hlabangana highlighted that having knowledge of the human rights discourse or being equipped in it, along with access to human rights lawyers, has proven to

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<sup>805</sup> Mr. Toto Nkosi (Toto), June 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

<sup>806</sup> Mr. Toto Nkosi (Toto), June 2015. Interviewed in Cape Town, South Africa.

enhance his sense of freedom and control over situations of violence.<sup>807</sup> Other participants noted that surviving requires access to resources and basic services, along with daily provisional sustenance, as it alleviates their immediate economic needs. The burden of this care has largely fallen on the second generation, particularly those who have left the country.

In this regard, participants highlighted various justice mechanisms. Because of the silenced memory of Gukurahundi, there was solidarity around the fact that Gukurahundi needs to be acknowledged and recognised, with an apology for it proffered; and around the idea that justice cannot occur without this acknowledgement. It was noted that a truth commission could help encourage truth-telling; although what such a commission would look like, what its parameters would be, or what it would address, were not highlighted. The majority of participants whose memory and lived reality as a result of Gukurahundi is around strife or lack of basic resources, stated that they require compensation as a priority. Compensation was seen in more than just financial terms and included access to a variety of social services. Ongoing material poverty impacts on survivors.

Whilst the majority of participants also highlighted that they want to see retributive justice for Gukurahundi through the courts, select leaders involved in administering justice were quick to note the sobering reality that they would not live to see such action taken; not unless Gukurahundi gains international traction and is tried as a crime through justice systems outside of the country, or unless a different dispensation to ZANU PF takes over the country. The older generation also added that they would like to look to “cultural” ways or *isiko* as a way to see Gukurahundi addressed. There is more research and writing needed to get a better understanding about *isiko* as a way of coping. Knowledge on it exists informally. Often, *isiko* and ideas of the mythical or spiritual are often deliberately maintained in secrecy and silence as part of their mysticism. So researching *isiko* could be interesting – whilst observing cultural tropes around it. *Isiko* can also produce its own silences. One way *isiko* could help, though, is through traditional healers whose capabilities can appease the dead or else give the living peace through rituals.

A brief consideration of transitional justice initiatives in Gukurahundi debates is worthwhile here. As this research study has highlighted, the Government of Zimbabwe has lacked willpower to address Gukurahundi and other injustices before that, with the Lancaster House Agreement of

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<sup>807</sup> Mr. Hlabangana, April 2016. Interviewed in Gwanda, Zimbabwe.

1979 and the Unity Accord of 1987, along with a series of amnesties around the time of Gukurahundi, warranting that crimes are glossed over. Chapter 6:11 of Zimbabwe's 2013 Constitution further ensures that it is difficult to institute criminal proceedings against a president before and during their tenure. Participants know that these "justice" initiatives have encouraged impunity, therefore it has resulted in them being mistrustful of any other justice initiatives coming from the ZANU-led government. Participants therefore did not believe that the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission Bill of 2013 (now Act, as at 2018) would fare any better in terms of bringing them justice, especially as it deliberately forces "reconciliation" and "forgive and forget" rhetoric on survivors and the nation as a whole.

In this regard, the last part of the study focused on personal or collective transitional justice mechanisms – outside of Government of Zimbabwe initiatives – with which various individuals, communities, and organisations have engaged as a means to memorialise Gukurahundi. These include plays, music, "fictional" novels, academic literature, exhumations, and reburials, along with crosses placed strategically where persons died, amongst a myriad other memorialisations. The greater number of these memorialisations are not within Zimbabwe's borders which is still a constricted site, and where a certain level of fear still exists amongst survivors.

## **9.3 The Way Forward**

### **9.3.1 Future Research**

Future research on this topic needs to bring other parameters of Gukurahundi to the fore. For example, there are aspects which this study was unable to address in terms of scope, such as the ability to interview a wider variety of actors to include "dissidents", members of the Fifth Brigade, clergymen, and white farmers, amongst others, in these spaces, so that alternative views and experiences were included in the telling.

Additional research can include more than simply widening the actors in such a study. It could also involve a historiography covering a longer lens of violence, which does not rest around one occurrence (in this case Gukurahundi), but rather a series of violations to date in the new Zimbabwe across a longer timeframe. Such future research would also be beneficial, as it removes the idea of a hierarchy of violations where Gukurahundi has been pitted as "exceptional", "unique", or "most significant" in comparison to others. Alexander, McGregor, and Ranger's compelling book, *Violence and Memory: One Hundred Years in the 'Dark Forests' of Matabeleland*, is an example of such research, as it spans across 100 years from the colonial era in 1890, to the

liberation struggle, right up to Gukurahundi in the 1980s. But it does not necessarily cover violence in the period thereafter.<sup>808</sup> Also, it is a geographical story located in Matabeleland, more than it is one of the larger nation. Another impressive work is Schmidt's *Colonialism and Violence in Zimbabwe: a History of Suffering*, whose thorough research on colonial Zimbabwe and the Second Chimurenga war, draws attention to the role of local communities in the resistance movement and as mobilizers for the African nationalism agenda.<sup>809</sup> To an extent, Schmidt's study is also geographically aligned to Honde Valley in the eastern highlands, and not necessarily the larger nation.

Another recommendation for further research includes studying a bevy of justice options available for addressing the Gukurahundi issue, for example, truth commissions; retribution through the courts nationally, regionally, and internationally; mediation processes; pursuing reparations; as well as creating national memory and memorials, amongst other things. Such a study is pertinent and is necessary to detail the negatives and the positives of various mechanisms. For instance, mechanisms such as the NPRC in Zimbabwe speak the terminology of reconciliation and peace. Yet, no real research has been done about the pros and cons of such mechanisms and on their suitability for Zimbabwe's context or for survivors wants/needs. In the face of denial, is reconciliation and forgiveness what survivors want and need? As it is, even having consensus on what reconciliation means has been elusive, and the reconciliatory direction forward has never been clearly defined. Further such research would support thinking about new alternative approaches to justice or else create synergies between several approaches. Authors such as Mia Swarts have deliberated upon the pros and cons of various transitional justice mechanisms in South Africa, and a similar exercise is still needed in the Zimbabwean context.<sup>810</sup> Such studies would be able to make recommendations and build scenarios around the type of intervention(s) best suited to the Gukurahundi issue and its context.

My final recommendation for future research relates to generating knowledge about Gukurahundi. The occurrence of Gukurahundi affected masses in the public space, yet the ideas and knowledge from studies such as this one are found mainly in thesis submissions, books, journal articles, and the like, which are only really for the consumption of the intellectual community. In this regard, it is proposed that findings and analyses pertaining to Gukurahundi

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<sup>808</sup> Alexander, Jocelyn., McGregor, JoAnn., and Ranger, T. O. . *Violence & Memory : One Hundred Years in the "Dark Forests" of Matabeleland* (Oxford: James Currey, 2000).

<sup>809</sup> Heike Schmidt, *Colonialism & Violence in Zimbabwe: a History of Suffering* (Woodbridge, Suffolk : James Currey, 2013).

<sup>810</sup> Mia Swart, "Apartheid reparations: In search of an appropriate remedial theory" *Southern African Public Law*, 28, 1, (2013), pp. 73- 90

are simplified and made accessible to a wider variety of people who want to hear about Gukurahundi outside of an academic paradigm. This speaks to the need for broader dissemination of “public history” works based on solid historical research.

### **9.3.2 Recommendations to the Zimbabwean Government**

The most ideal situation would be that the Government of Zimbabwe comprehensively acknowledges the occurrence of Operation Gukurahundi, even though there are issues of culpability that would need consideration. Over and above the recognition of Gukurahundi, there is a need for political will to see this atrocity and other violations being addressed. Seemingly, the Zimbabwean government has concentrated its efforts on building the state (a one party state at that), without trying to rebuild cooperation initiatives across the many divisions in Zimbabwe.

Additionally, the Zimbabwean government can foster transparency by releasing the report of the Chihambakwe Commission of Enquiry (or truth commission) into the Gukurahundi massacres, based on the work done by it in 1983–1984, along with any other relevant reports or embargoed materials, so that the necessary documentation and paraphernalia is made public. Through availing this documentation, the state itself – in the same way that scholars are doing – could invest time in an analysis of Gukurahundi and form strategies by being better informed, with intelligence or evidence in tow.

The Zimbabwean government further needs to adopt a survivor (and a community) lens henceforth when addressing these issues, as most official responses to Gukurahundi are top-down and often far removed from those affected. For instance, the Unity Accord was hastily agreed upon between Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo without any involvement of civilians. Amnesties also represent top-down pronouncements which the government makes to the country, yet these decisions impact civilian lives and only produce more silences. This speaks to the need for the government to widen consultation, enhance dialogue, and focus on buy-in processes, as neglect of survivors is tantamount to a silencing of their views.

Key government departments or ministries, such as social services, welfare, and development; education; and health, ought to be equipped with the funds and resources necessary to address the socio-economic realities which occurrences such as Gukurahundi have created or else are a ripple effect of. This includes the provision of disability grants, free education, free healthcare, pensions, compensation, and the right to identification documentation – such formal arrangements do not currently exist for survivors of mass violence specifically, nor are they easily

accessible generally. Admittedly, doing this amidst an ongoing economic crisis is likely to be difficult and controversial, especially when “military veterans” have benefitted the most historically and financially from the ruling party. It must be reiterated that many participants in this study highlighted their preference for compensatory and distributive rights as a means to remedy Gukurahundi, as opposed to retribution which has a legalistic bias towards criminal justice and culpability.

In similar vein, there needs to be a strengthening of the country’s judicial services or else legislative reform, so that citizens have clearly spelt out and protected legal recourses in instances of violence, going forward. Currently, the Zimbabwean judiciary has not involved itself enough in Gukurahundi matters and is an absent actor from the debate. It is difficult to realise the recommendation made here though, because the judiciary, which is meant to be a separate mechanism from the government (the executive), is to a large extent partisan to, and a beneficiary, of the ruling ZANU PF dispensation, with senior members of the judiciary themselves nominated by the president to key positions.

Overall, it would be worthwhile for the Zimbabwean government to invest in certain skill sets and encourage, for example, hiring in the psycho-social field. According to Friendship Bench statistics, there are currently 12 psychiatrists in a country of over 15 million people. Psycho-social and mental health care are clearly scarce skills which need to be augmented. This research study’s participants highlighted that an aspect of surviving involves having a space to talk about Gukurahundi and about life in general with others. Thus, more people with understanding and knowledge of concepts like trauma, etc. ought to be included in Gukurahundi deliberations.

Other areas that need investment include the distillation of language for terms such as “trauma” and “depression” into local lexicon, so that understanding and use of these terms are made contextual, as survivor memories are contextual and rooted in language. Admittedly, it is going to be complicated. Another area for attention is the promotion of creativity when working with, or else addressing, emotionally laden issues such as Gukurahundi. I have earlier given the limited example of plays and novels as an accessible but creative way to get dialogue going on the occurrence, although this space has been largely confined in Zimbabwe. In this way, topics like Gukurahundi become accessible to everyone and do not remain amongst a privy few.

The government ought to encourage a range of justice initiatives when addressing occurrences such as Gukurahundi, and not opt for one specific initiative to the neglect of others. These initiatives have to be gender sensitive. For instance, a commission which puts women in a



position where they have to recount their rape ordeal – in front of the masses at that – re-traumatises them. And whilst trying to address gendered memory, it brings with it a whole new set of other gendered complexities. Additionally, initiatives need to encourage synergy in thinking across generations. It is not enough for *isiko* (cultural rituals) to be performed as a means of addressing Gukurahundi, if this excludes the second generation (who are likely to be less familiar with these rituals) from the process. In this regard, the government should support ventures such as exhumation processes, rather than persecute or hinder them, as happened in the case of the Amani Trust project, in which the government denied the project clearance papers and found other ways, such as intimidation, to frustrate its efforts. The government ought to encourage and fund memorialisation initiatives throughout the country – not solely those related to Gukurahundi – as a means to encourage a culture of reminiscing and removing silences.

The Zimbabwean government needs to design justice initiatives across spatial geographies. Mashingaidze notes that a big flaw with post-colonial development and engagement in Zimbabwe is that it tends to be urban, and not rural.<sup>811</sup> This is an issue which needs to be addressed, as Gukurahundi has a rural existence, an urban existence, as well as a regional and international one through the diaspora. For example, the public NPRC gatherings, held in 2018, in urban Bulawayo and Gwanda to talk through matters of reconciliation, became exclusionary reforms in themselves. In a country whose populace is still largely rural (67.72%), it means justice initiatives are not being made accessible to those who need them the most if discussions are held in cities.<sup>812</sup> Additionally, Zimbabwean matters cannot be addressed fully only within the confines of Zimbabwe's geographical borders, as it means that those displaced across borders, as well as those that migrated for socio-economic, political, and other reasons, are perpetually left out of the conversation and need to be reintroduced.<sup>813</sup> Also, Gukurahundi to an extent is a global story and includes the involvement of a variety of foreign diplomatic and humanitarian actors. It is necessary that the conversation is widened to include some of these actors (i.e. select nation states) who played a role in Gukurahundi's complicated web, and for them to be a part of the solution.

With regard to thinking about the way forward for official Zimbabwean history as it is taught at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels, it is recommended that a multiplicity of histories are promoted in curricula. These histories will enhance the knowledge which can be passed down intergenerationally. This has been highlighted by authors such as Eltringham, as well as this

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<sup>811</sup> Mashingaidze, "Zimbabwe National Unity Accord", 89.

<sup>812</sup> <https://tradingeconomics.com/zimbabwe/rural-population-percent-of-total-population-wb-data.html>

<sup>813</sup> "Whether people are displaced within or across borders, their frequent lack of documentation, which is often lost or confiscated, can create difficulties for restitution and reparations programs" ... Duthie, 2011: 249.

study's participants who felt that history was exclusionary, distorted, one-sided, and mirrored with silences.<sup>814</sup> Zimbabwe needs to reconsider its educational curriculum. Changes to Zimbabwe's history curriculum should not be focused solely on the events of Gukurahundi per se, but rather should seek to promote spaces where multiple memories, such as the story of ZANU along with ZAPU and other actors, are brought to the fore. Additionally, these incorporated multiple histories (official and unofficial) should play a reconciliatory role without the ethnic binaries which are currently emanating out of history books today. These endorsements of ethnic inventions should be removed/censored as they are insensitive and are a likely source of continued division in the country.<sup>815</sup>

The state should not be the custodian of all official history, as is currently the case in Zimbabwe. Other centres of knowledge as well as a variety of actors should be incorporated into the discourse. Justice/peace/reconciliation discourses have been left in the hands of a few stakeholders, who are not representative of the larger community or aware of its needs and realities. For instance, the Church has been a key actor and has pushed for a forgiveness, peace, and reconciliation agenda, even as authors such as Gobodo-Madikizela assert that forgiveness cannot be prescribed.<sup>816</sup> Civil society, meanwhile, has called for various forms of justice – usually at the international level, based on the understanding that a complicit ZANU is not best suited to fulfil the demands of retributive justice nationally.

### **9.3.3 Recommendations to Other Actors**

Non-governmental organisations and other actors involved in justice initiatives need to co-ordinate their efforts, so that they are not doing the same thing simultaneously in a fragmented and disjointed manner. It is important that they actively work within larger networks and symbiotically, thus sharing ideas and best practices on how to deal with the issues at hand.

Some of these actors, such as the Church and traditional leadership structures, historically have a patriarchal and ageist existence. This means that well-meaning reforms or ideas towards Gukurahundi are not gender-sensitive, are not intergenerational, and thus can cause harm.

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<sup>814</sup> Eltringham, *Accounting for horror Post-Genocide*, (2004).

<sup>815</sup> Zondo. S. 2012. Tribalism taught at Zimbabwe Schools. Bulawayo 24 News. 24 Feb 2101. <http://bulawayo24.com/index-id-news-sc-local-byo-12509.html>

<sup>816</sup> Gobodo-Madikizela, Pumla. "Trauma, Forgiveness and the Witnessing Dance: Making Public Spaces Intimate." *Journal of Analytical Psychology* 53, no. 2 (April 2008): 169–188.

A recommendation to these actors is that not only do they have to coordinate efforts amongst themselves, but they have to ensure that there is symbiosis and synergy between international, national, and local efforts (or mechanisms).

## **9.4 Conclusion**

This work has engaged in several discussions which demonstrate that state denial strategies in Zimbabwe over three decades have bred and sustained a widespread set of silences. These silences have produced selected and varied memory trajectories amongst urban and rural, male and female, and first- and second-generation survivors – both in and outside Zimbabwe. They have also helped to ensure that access to justice, in all its forms, is curtailed in Zimbabwe.

Admittedly, it is difficult to conclude the Gukurahundi narrative decisively. The nature of the occurrence and that of oral history itself remain uncertain, because humans and their processes are varied, personal, and deeply complex. There will always be myriads of questions around what a participant said and what they did not say. This inconclusiveness on matters such as Gukurahundi is exacerbated by the reality that Zimbabwe's current political circumstances see the same leaders (who are associated with being Gukurahundi's perpetrators) in rulership. The current reality is therefore that the political forces producing these silences are so much more prevalent than any other voices, and this remains a stumbling block for initiatives hoping to address occurrences such as Gukurahundi.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A : Participants Profiles

PARTICIPANTS*	AGE	GENDER	INTERVIEW LOCATION	DATE	PROFESSION
1. Katherine	50–55	Female	Bulawayo, Zimbabwe	Dec 2014 (1hr 10mins)	Civil society organisation (CSO)
2. Thobela Moyo	30–35	Male	Cape Town, South Africa	May 2014 (1hr 27mins)	Self-employed producer (creative arts)
3. Gogo MaMoyo	60–65	Female	Bulawayo	Dec 2014 (47mins)	Self-employed vendor selling vegetables, etc.
4. Sis' Sipho	40–45	Female	Bulawayo	Dec 2014 (1hr 30mins)	Employed at an NGO /CSO
5. Rasta	45–50	Male	Johannesburg, South Africa	Nov 2015 (2hrs)	Equestrian farmhand
6. Brian Nyathi	45–50	Male	Johannesburg	Nov 2015 (1hr 10mins)	Accountant at an NGO
7. Toto Nkosi (Toto)	50–55	Male	Cape Town	Jun 2015 (1hr 55mins)	Academic and entrepreneur
8. Jabulani Mpande	75–80	Male	Cape Town	Aug 2015 (3hrs 41mins)	Retired academic; ZAPU liberationist.
9. MaNcube	45–50	Female	Gwanda, Zimbabwe	Apr 2016 (1hr 7mins)	Subsistence farmer
10. Jonah Dube	45–50	Male	Gwanda	Apr 2016 (45mins)	Subsistence farmer
11. Gogo Thandeka	45–50	Female	Gwanda	Apr 2016 (31mins)	Subsistence farmer
12. Tshabalala	65–70	Male	Bulawayo	Apr 2016 (5hrs 13mins)	ZAPU liberationist; NGO sector

<b>PARTICIPANTS*</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>GENDER</b>	<b>INTERVIEW LOCATION</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>PROFESSION</b>
13. Themba Nkomo	55–60	Male	Bulawayo	Apr 2016 (1hr 52mins)	ZAPU liberationist; NGO sector
14. Zwelibanzi Malinga	40–45	Male	Bulawayo	Apr 2016 (40mins)	Employed in the NGO sector (advocacy)
15. Mama Keletso	55–60	Female	Bulawayo	Apr 2016 (2hrs 9mins)	ZAPU liberationist; self-employed (poultry)
16. MaMpofu	50–55	Female	Gwanda	Apr 2016 (45mins)	Housewife; Subsistence farmer
17. Mthombeni	60–65	Male	Gwanda	Apr 2016 (1hr 15mins)	Subsistence farmer
18. Mama ka Zonda	45–50	Female	Gwanda	Apr 2016 (1hr 7mins)	Housewife; Subsistence farmer
19. Hlabangana	50–55	Male	Gwanda	Apr 2016 (34mins)	Human rights activist; Subsistence farmer
20. Ngulube	55–60	Male	Bulawayo	May 2016 (1hr 55mins)	ZAPU liberationist; NGO sector
21. Maphosa	60–55	Male	Bulawayo	May 2016 (1hr)	ZAPU liberationist; retired army
22. Nkiwane	55–60	Male	Bulawayo	May 2016 (1hr 30mins)	ZAPU liberationist; retired army
23. Dungeni	60–65	Male	Bulawayo	May 2016 (1hr 16mins)	ZAPU liberationist; self-employed

<b>PARTICIPANTS*</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>GENDER</b>	<b>INTERVIEW LOCATION</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>PROFESSION</b>
24. Nobuhle Sithole	30–35	Female	Cape Town	May 2014 (1hr)	Human Resource management
25. Silas Dube	35–40	Male	Cape Town	May 2014 (45mins)	Academic
26. Mthimkhulu	60–65	Male	Cape Town	Jun 2016 (1hr 35mins)	Financial sector
27. Dube Senior	75–80	Male	Gwanda	Apr 2016 (45mins)	Subsistence farmer
28. Sis Langa	30–35	Female	Cape Town	Jun 2016, (1hr 23mins)	Academic & development

## Appendix B: Spaces From Which Gukurahundi Experiences and Happenings Emanate

PARTICIPANT	SPACE
1. Katherine	Bulawayo province
2. Thobela Moyo	Umzingwane district, Matabeleland South province
3. Gogo MaMoyo	Lupane district, Matabeleland North province
4. Sis' Siphos	Lupane district, Matabeleland North province
5. Rasta	Bulilimamangwe district, Matabeleland South province
6. Brian Nyathi	Matobo district, Matabeleland South province
7. Toto Nkosi	Kezi, Matobo district, Matabeleland South province
8. Jabulani Mpande	Nkayi district, Matabeleland North province
9. MaNcube	Kezi, Matobo district, Matabeleland South province
10. Jonah Dube	Gwanda district, Matabeleland South province
11. Gogo Thandeka	Gwanda district, Matabeleland South province
12. Tshabalala	Lupane and Hwange districts, Matabeleland North province
13. Themba Nkomo	Plumtree, Bulilimamangwe district, Matabeleland South province
14. Zwelibanzi Malinga	Bulawayo province
15. Mama Keletso	Beitbridge district, Matabeleland South province
16. MaMpofu	Umzingwane district, Matabeleland South province
17. Mthombeni	Gwanda (North) district, Matabeleland South province
18. Mama ka Zonda	Gwanda (South) district, Matabeleland South province
19. Hlabangana	Gwanda district, Matabeleland South province
20. Ngulube	Nkayi district, Matabeleland North Province
21. Maphosa	Plumtree, Bulilimamangwe district, Matabeleland South province
22. Nkiwane	Tsholotsho district, Matabeleland North province
23. Dungeni	Tsholotsho district, Matabeleland North province
24. Nobuhle Sithole	Bulawayo province
25. Silas Dube	Plumtree, Bulilimamangwe district, Matabeleland South province
26. Mthimkhulu	Umzingwane district, Matabeleland South province
27. Dube Senior	Gwanda district, Matabeleland South province
28. Sis Langa	Bulawayo province